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Femcels: Where are the Women in the Incelosphere? An Exploratory Content Analysis of
Femcel Forums

by

Madeline Bobo

Under the Direction of Elisabeth O. Burgess, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2023

ABSTRACT

Previous research on the online community known as involuntary celibates (henceforth, incels) has primarily focused on the men that belong to this group. However, past research indicates the women do have a history of involuntary celibacy. Where did these women go? This research draws on previous incel research, as well as theoretical perspectives such as hegemonic masculinity and identity construction. In this grounded theory informed exploratory qualitative content analysis of online femcel forums, the data reveals that these women have found their own corner of the Internet to foster their community. Femcels share many experiences, but they remain a diverse group of women in both race, age, and background. Femcels are critical of their bodies and experience loneliness in their everyday offline lives. Femcel forums are used as places for these women to find validation in their identities, womanhood, and personhood.

INDEX WORDS: Involuntary celibacy, Incels, Femcels, Content analysis, Website forums, Gender

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Madeline Bobo
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Femcel Forums

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May 2023

DEDICATION

I would like to thank the many people in my life who have supported me throughout my academic career. Even if you didn't completely understand what I was working on all this time, I still appreciate you cheering me on. Thank you to my parents Stephanie Reed, Brian Reed, and David Bobo for raising me. Thank you to my extra set of parents Pamela and Greg McIntosh. Thank you to my sisters Alex, Kristin, and Farrah for being my cheerleaders throughout this process. Thank you to all the grandparents in my life for your love and support. Thank you to the rest of my family. I am stronger because of you all.

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And a special thank you to the most important person in my life. T, you will never know how much your love and support has contributed to the completion of this paper. You listened while I cried and held my hand through the hard parts. I love you. This paper is as much yours as it is mine.

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“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants” – Sir Isaac Newton

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1 INTRODUCTION

“The Incel Rebellion has already begun!” These are the words that Alek Minassian posted to his Facebook page just minutes before he would drive his van through a crowd of people killing eleven and injuring fifteen people (Aronowitz 2021). The world would later find out that Minassian was a member of the online subculture known as involuntary celibates, or incels. This community is characterized by its members who struggle to find sexual partners and who are resentful of those who are sexually active (Aronowitz 2021). It is only natural for people to seek community. People like to feel as though they belong and fit in. However, not everyone joins a community that encourages them to commit violent acts against other people. The incel community has found a foothold in online spaces. Forums and subreddits have allowed for likeminded individuals to find each other and get that feeling of connection they have been searching for. Although not all online incel groups are home to violent ideas and beliefs, there is an alarming number of incels who participate in and share hateful rhetoric.

Despite ever growing knowledge and awareness of the online community known as involuntary celibates (or incels), this research has focused primarily on the men who belong to this group. If you are a woman, this community does not seem to welcome you in the same way they do men. In fact, most incels does not even recognize that being involuntarily celibate is an experience that is possible for women (Aronowitz 2021). As a result, women have turned to creating their own online communities. These women refer to themselves as “femcels.” This is a “community of women online who describe themselves as being unable to have sexual or romantic relationships as a result of a toxic blend of misogyny and impossible beauty standards” (Aronowitz 2021). Femcels, if at all, are not recognized by society to the same degree as incels. Because of this, there has been little to no research done on the women in this community that

self-identify as incels. Perhaps this is due to the violent nature of some of these men. Or maybe it is due to the rising rates of suicide in men. All research on the incel community has focused on men (Daly and Reed 2021; Ging 2019; Glace, Dover, and Zarkin 2021; Jaki et al. 2019; Maxwell et al. 2020; O'Donnell 2021; O'Malley, Holt, and Holt 2020; Preston, Halpin, and Maguire 2021; Williams et al. 2021; Witt 2020). What about the women in this population? Do they not also deserve to be studied? Why do these disparities in the study of women persist? How did these women become invisible to an already hidden community? There is a large gap in research for the femcel community that needs to be brought up to the same level as the men. As such, this research aims to explore the ideology of femcels and how this group differs from the men who self-identify as incels.

Any research on this subject would of course advance knowledge for knowledge's sake. However, there are more wide-reaching implications for researching this community. Research on incels has advanced the body of knowledge on online communities, identity construction, mental health, and the ways in which violence and masculinity can be intertwined. However, the body of knowledge on incels is only relevant to the male incel community. We do not know how these concepts and theories may apply to women who self-identify as femcels. We do not know the long-term ramifications of belonging to these communities. Incel research has highlighted the dangerous individuals who can emerge from a community that can so quickly become toxic and hate filled (Glace et al. 2021; Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro 2020; Jaki et al. 2019; O'Donnell 2021; Preston et al. 2021; Speckhard et al. 2020; Tomkinson, Harper, and Attwell 2020; Witt 2020). What about the women that are in parallel online communities? Do they have the potential for violence, or is there something different in the way these communities differ that could provide important insight into this violent mindset?

Four main research questions guide this study. RQ1: What are the shared experiences of women who self-identify as incels? RQ2: How do femcels talk about their experiences? This will help to situate the femcel community in relation to the existing research that has been done on incels to determine where they may differ and what characteristics they may share. RQ3: What are the core beliefs and values of femcels? By exploring common experiences and comparing these to the incel community, I may determine what the core beliefs and values of this community are. RQ4: How are femininities and other forms of gender constructed within femcel spaces? Masculinity and the way it can be performed are important topics in the incel community. As such, it is important that femininity is also explored in the ways it exists in the femcel community for better points of comparison.

To explore my research questions, I conducted a qualitative content analysis informed by grounded theory. I collected my own data from online forum websites that are dedicated to femcels. I used open coding methods to describe the data and identify emerging themes. There were several sensitizing concepts I used to guide my analysis; these included involuntary celibacy, masculinity, femininity, body image, and self-esteem.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Involuntary celibates first emerged as a distinct community in the 1990s, yet there is little research about those early groups who identified this way. Initial research on this community used a life course perspective to understand the process by which groups of people became and remained involuntarily celibate. This study identified these groups of involuntary celibates as those who “may be married or partnered persons whose partners no longer desire to have sex with them, unpartnered singles who have never had sex, or unpartnered singles who have had

sexual relationships in the past, but are unable to currently find partners” (Donnelly et al. 2001:159). However, the focus of research on involuntary celibacy has changed over time as the identity has been adopted and co-opted by online communities and men’s rights groups. Although there have been some research studies on this newer stage in involuntary celibacy’s existence, all of these have focused on the men in this community. Recent research has focused on male incels and issues of hyper-masculinity, misogyny, violence against women, and terrorism (Speckhard et al. 2020; Williams et al. 2021; Witt 2020). There is a dearth of research on involuntary celibacy and other populations, and women are absent in contemporary research.

2.1 A Brief History of Involuntary Celibacy

Previous research defined incels as a person who “desires to have sex, but has been unable to find a willing partner for at least six months prior to being surveyed” (Donnelly et al. 2001:159). However, this research does make the stipulation that the length of time that a person has been without engaging in sexual activities is not as important as the person self-defining or self-identifying as involuntarily celibate (Donnelly et al. 2001; Williams et al. 2021). Studies have found that a variety of different people would classify themselves as incels. For example, early incel research tended to focus on those who were married or partnered with someone who no longer engaged in sexual activities with them, people without partners who had never engaged in sexual activities, unpartnered people who have engaged in sexual activities in the past but have not in a while, or those who lived with conditions that made engaging in sexual activities difficult or impossible (Donnelly et al. 2001; Donnelly and Burgess 2008). Donnelly’s research shows that incels could be anyone (2001). They came from all walks of life, all sexual orientations, all races, and all genders. The one thing that united them all was this lack of a desired sexual relationship or contact.

Discussing sexual topics is still taboo for many people and, as such, it can be difficult for some to talk about the issues they may be facing in their sex lives. This led to the development of online communities for those who were seeking support and connection with others who have been experiencing the same issues. One research study marks the beginning of the online incel support group community in the late 1990s with one of the first online discussion boards known as “Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project” (Taylor 2018). Alana was an undergraduate student who created this message board as a safe space for those who were not experiencing much luck in the dating realm (Taylor 2018). These incels saw themselves as being involuntarily celibate because they felt undesirable or excluded from romantic or sexual relationships (Speckhard et al. 2020; Taylor 2018). The users of this group explained that they felt their lack of social skills, body image issues, and living and work arrangements all contributed to their involuntary celibacy (Speckhard et al. 2020; Taylor 2018). Anyone was allowed to join Alana’s chat room regardless of their gender, race, or sexual orientation.

Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project did not last forever. A shift in the discourse surrounding involuntary celibacy occurred in the mid-2000s and continued throughout the early 2010s (Daly and Reed 2021). Around this time, incel groups (and the concept of incelism in general) became focused solely on men who self-identified in this way. In particular, this group became a community for men who felt as though they did not fit into the idealized version of masculinity (Daly and Reed 2021). These men found platforms and pages all over the Internet that were dedicated to those who shared this same experience of not feeling as though they fit into the hegemonic idea of masculinity. This sector of the Internet is commonly known as the “Manosphere,” and it includes pages for groups such as the Men’s Rights Movement, Men Going Their Own Way, and Pick Up Artists (Daly and Reed 2021; Ging 2019; Glace et al.

2021). Although not all men who belong to these groups identify as incels, incels frequent these platforms. These groups all have unique ideologies and practices, but common threads include opposition to the feminist movement and the belief that feminism victimizes and subordinates men (Daly and Reed 2021; Ging 2019). The Manosphere amplifies misogynistic rhetoric that paints women as evil and immoral (O'Donnell 2021). Thus, even though the online forums were originally created for all people who were having trouble obtaining a sexual or romantic relationships, these spaces are now dedicated to a group of incels solely comprised of men. Who are the incels that exist in these online spaces? They are part of an online subculture or subgroup of the Men's Rights Movement (Witt 2020). They come from a wide variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds and reside all over the world. However, most incels are white, Christian, heterosexual men from middle class backgrounds. These men also tend to be under 35 and not have college degrees (Speckhard et al. 2020). Many groups agree that one does not need to be a virgin to be an incel (Speckhard et al. 2020). No research exists that provides any demographic details about the femcel community.

The typical user of the incel forums uses those spaces to vent their anger or frustration to those they feel will understand how what they deem to be an unfair world has left them without a sexual relationship through no fault of their own (Ging 2019; Glace et al. 2021; O'Donnell 2021). These incels begin to feel entitled to the bodies of women and begin to hate them. Incel communities direct their hate primarily toward women, but they also direct hatred toward other men whom they feel fit the ideal standard of masculinity that so marginalizes them (O'Donnell 2021). These men find kindred spirits in the Manosphere who share the belief that the version of masculinity they are performing, or enacting is being marginalized by society at large. As a

result of this, they feel they must both oppose this marginalization as well as to reclaim the masculinity they think they have lost. Both are accomplished through one thing – violence.

Central to incel ideology and their master narrative of the world are these violent and misogynistic beliefs (Williams et al. 2021). Violence and hate speech are commonplace in modern incel communities, and some incels are even willing to act on their violent beliefs and commit violent acts of murder (Williams et al. 2021). Whether in word, thought, or action, violence is something that is justified, rationalized, and respected in most current online men's incel spaces (O'Malley et al. 2020; Witt 2020). Violence is seen as inherently masculine, but it can also be seen as a way to liberate or emancipate these incel men from the societal views of masculinity (Witt 2020). This violent frame becomes the way that incels view all areas of their lives: sexuality, social capital, power, relationships, etc. While only a small portion of incels have committed public violent acts, the use of violence to pursue an ideological goal falls under the genre of violent extremism and can therefore be linked to terrorism (Tomkinson et al. 2020). As a result, some organizations and policy makers are now turning their attention to the men's incel community, and especially the extremist fringes, as potential perpetrators of terrorism and hate crimes (Hoffman et al. 2020).

The collection of online forums, YouTube channels, Reddit pages, chat rooms, and other media that are used to help promote incel ideas and experiences is commonly referred to as the Incelosphere (Daly and Reed 2021). The Incelosphere is a gendered community. Incels tend to have a hierarchical view on gender, as well as the desire to reclaim a version of manhood from an idealized past. The idea that women are lesser humans than men pervades incel forums (O'Donnell 2021). In addition, incels tend to judge other men in order to assert their superiority and argue that they deserve a higher place in the hierarchy of men due to their intelligence or

entitlement (O'Donnell 2021). Some scholars refer to this as toxic masculinity, which specifically refers to the norms, beliefs, and behaviors that are associated with masculinity but that tend to be harmful to others (Ging 2019; Maxwell et al. 2020). However, men in the Manosphere and Incelsphere tend to oppose the term “toxic masculinity” as they perceive it to be another aspect on the “war on men,” which is a term commonly used in anti-feminist rhetoric (Maxwell et al. 2020:1855). In these spaces, men judge women as well as each other to demonstrate this hierarchy. The men discuss how women are evil, but they also teach each other tips on how to get women to have sex with them. They view women as objects to be “won” or “had” through certain techniques that are reminiscent to objectives in a game (O'Donnell 2021). A hegemonic masculinity theoretical framework is often used to study these communities (Daly and Reed 2021).

Contemporary framing of the incel community explicitly excludes women (Preston et al. 2021). Many incels share the belief that women cannot be incels as they theoretically could have a sexual partner if they so choose (Maxwell et al. 2020). As a result, there is a significant gap in research about women in the current incel community. Where have the women gone who at one point were welcomed into Alana's incel forum? How has that portion of this population changed and evolved over time as the Incelsphere and the Manosphere have become overlapping circles of communities? This research aims to uncover the thoughts, beliefs, and values of this forgotten portion of the incel community.

2.2 The Manosphere, Online Forum Communities, and Web 2.0

The Internet has gone through many iterations and evolutions over its lifespan, and it is now a central part of the networks of this new generation of incels which can be traced back to an evolution of the Internet known as Web 2.0. This term is used to describe an Internet that has

a special emphasis on social networking and user-generated content (Hosch n.d.). However, a more exact definition of what Web 2.0 fully encompasses has eluded most academics (Wilson et al. 2011). What researchers and academics tend to focus on is the impact that Web 2.0 has had on society. The Internet has become a place not just where people can buy and sell items, but a platform for connecting people to each other (Wilson et al. 2011). Thus, a new age of online communities that can share ideas and content with like-minded individuals emerged.

These new technological changes have led to what we now think of as social networking sites. These are websites that are intended for teenagers and adult audiences, though there are some that target even younger demographics (Livingstone and Brake 2010). Survey research has found that people tend to visit their social networking sites every day or every other day, which demonstrates how important these online spaces are for developing communities and interacting with others (Livingstone and Brake 2010). Perhaps the most important and impactful element of social networking sites are the ways in which they can be used to co-construct social identities. Identities are formed through our interactions with others, and the interactions on social networking sites are no different. Younger people are now performing and experimenting with their identities in these online spaces. Human beings share a strong drive for connection, and with the dramatic increase in online social networking sites, they are now able to communicate with others and construct a presentation of self that can be affirmed by their peers (Livingstone and Brake 2010).

The incel community has also found its footing on online social networking sites. The collection of forums and other such websites comprise the “Manosphere” where incels can promote their version of masculinity and their growing opposition to feminism (Speckhard et al. 2020). These websites have become places where incels can connect with each other, learn about

what it means to be an incel, and share their experiences. Incels and their community “[operate] almost completely online [which] provides an outlet for members to express anger, frustration and blame towards women and society at large for feeling that they fail to include them in the prospect of sexual contact and partnership” (Speckhard et al. 2020:89). Due to the nature of many incel communities, these sites have become places where the participation in and celebration of misogynistic activities and ideas have become commonplace (Preston et al. 2021). There is very little recourse for this behavior as these are insular communities where most members tend to share those same ideas and sentiments. In fact, these communities thrived on websites such as 4chan and Reddit as it seemed they were immune from backlash. This changed, however, in 2017 when the primary incel community on Reddit was banned for inciting violence against women (Gothard et al. 2021; Speckhard et al. 2020). As a result, many incels migrated to smaller and more niche forums, or they attempted to create platforms of their own from which they could not be banned (Speckhard et al. 2020). This is a common strategy for communities that are banned for promoting hate speech on platforms (Gothard et al. 2021). These sites are generally classified as “deviant cybercommunities” by cyber criminologists (Williams et al. 2021:388). They are important parts of the incel community as they “[provide] an environment for individuals to interact and engage in deviance with others who share and promote similar hateful sentiments” (Williams et al. 2021:388). These groups are always seeking those places where they can continue their hateful rhetoric.

One of the unique things about the incel community is the manner in which they communicate their rhetoric. The incel community spreads their hate speech and misogynistic ideas through “trolling” and “shit-posting.” These terms are used to describe the creation and use of content that is meant to provoke a response from their target audience. These desired

responses from their audiences could include laughter from those within the community, or anger and frustration from those outside the community. This type of communication and content creation is common within online communities, especially those with connections to the online alt-right (Jaki et al. 2019; Witt 2020). This phenomenon can be explained by what cyberpsychologists call the “online disinhibition effect.” The incel is virtually anonymous, and thus feels more empowered to use hate speech. The anonymity of the incel is coupled with the invisibility of the recipient of this “trolling” which makes the incel more likely to act out as they do not fear repercussions and are also not face to face with whoever they are lashing out at (Jaki et al. 2019). This “trolling” reinforces the idea of an in-group out-group mentality in which an out-group (women) is constructed and persecuted by those within the in-group (incels). Women are seen as to blame for the negative things in an incel’s life, and, as such, they face hateful rhetoric (Jaki et al. 2019).

When studying “shit-posting” or “trolling” in online communities, it can be difficult to determine intent. If these comments are made and this rhetoric is spread in a joking manner or is said to be in jest, how do we study this in a serious way? Witt (2020) explains that we should not try to look for and differentiate content that is made with serious intent or in a joking manner. Other scholars have noted that “trolling” in the way that the incel community does can be seen as directed and intentional harassment and violence towards others. The motivations behind their words are, more often than not, malicious. The alt-right groups or incels will claim that malicious intent is assigned to their words when there is none and that they should not be taken seriously, but this does not mean that there are no ramifications (Witt 2020). Scholars and researchers are often not able to question those who create “shit-posts” or who engage in “trolling” and determine what their intent behind their messaging was, but what is clear through the history of

the incel community is that the outcome is the same. There are those within the community who will look at those hate-filled messages and act on them because they believe them to be serious. So this content should be taken seriously because there are those who will face violence or commit violence even if the original statements were made in a joking manner (Witt 2020). There are real world consequences to the statements made in these online communities.

2.3 Identity Construction

The notion of identity is central to our being. People spend a lot of time thinking about who they are and how they fit into the world. The formation of our identity and the meaning that we construct around our identity is a fundamental aspect of the human experience. This is especially true and important during adolescence (Noble-Carr and Woodman 2018). This is a time in a person's life where they have enough awareness and independence to think about who they are as people. Who are they right now, and who do they want to be in the future? Our identities are embedded within the societal structures in which we exist and the social networks in which we find ourselves (Howard 2000).

What exactly is identity and how can we understand it? According to Howard (2000), there are two main perspectives in social psychology that help us to understand the traditional theories and understandings of identity. The first perspective is "social cognition theory". This theory addresses how we store and process information (Howard 2000). Humans take in a lot of information daily and need to find ways to make all of that information make sense. In order to do this, the mind creates "cognitive schemas." These are "abstract and organized packages of information" (Howard 2000:368). Some of the information that is stored in these cognitive schemas relate to the formation of our identity. The schemas help us to cognitively organize the information our brain is processing so we can understand it all and use it to create our own

identities. This organization and cognitive process is done on both an individual and a group level. Individually, the self-schemas that we have allow us to organize our ideas surrounding our personal identity. This can include thinking through our personal characteristics, goals, behaviors, etc (Howard 2000). On a group level, group schemas help us to organize information surrounding our social positions and statuses within a group. These can also be thought of as similar to stereotypes. For example, this schema can include thinking through and organizing information about our gender, race, age, or social class as these social positions have consequences in regard to our sense of self and how we process our identity (Howard 2000). Within each person, there are ongoing cognitive processes about who we are and how we fit into groups. These processes help us to create and develop our sense of identity.

The second perspective surrounding identity formation involves symbolic interaction (Howard 2000). We do more than just think about who we are and how we fit into groups of people; we must also interact with others to create meaning for our identity. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), our identity is part of our subjective reality. Our identity is something that we form through our social processes and relations. It is a collaborative process that occurs in relation to others. Identity has a dialectical relationship with our society. Even when we have a solidified form of our identity, it is still maintained, modified, or even reshaped through our social interactions and the social structure in which we exist (Berger and Luckmann 1966). One of the ways that this is done is through language and social interactions. The language that we use is an important part of identity formation. Our identity is something that we do; and we construct, negotiate, and communicate that identity through our language (Howard 2000). Identities are social constructions that are created through our language and interactions. These identities become meaningful in social and material ways (Howard 2000). This communication

and use of language can be done in person, but it can also be done through various other forms of media. These media include online message boards, forums, chat rooms, and other social networking sites.

Social networking sites may be places where identity formation and maintenance take place. Whittaker and Gillespie (2013) argue that social networking websites may be useful as tools for constructing self and community. Social networking sites allow people, especially young people, to practice constructing their identity. They can use different sites to portray different aspects of their personality and interact with others to get feedback on their own self-presentation. In this way, they are engaging in those needed social interactions and dialectical processes that allow for a solidified version of identity to form. These interactions lead to social recognition and validation from their chosen online communities and can reinforce a sense of self and identity as an individual (Whittaker and Gillespie 2013). Additionally, adolescents use online spaces to work through aspects of their identity that they may find difficult to talk about in their offline lives (Subrahmanyam, Greenfield, and Tynes 2004). Through the use of deliberate self-presentation on online spaces, emerging adults can then experiment with those facets of themselves and their identities that they may be uncomfortable expressing out loud (Mazur and Kozarian 2010).

Adolescents and young adults may be more open to experimenting with their identity online because the virtual world feels like a safer environment to explore their budding identities than in the “real” world (Subrahmanyam et al. 2004). People are able to engage and interact with others with whom they feel connected to in these online spaces which can play an important role in their socialization. These online spaces may provide a community to safely express and explore their emerging sense of self and identity. In addition, websites are also often interconnected with

each other, which can facilitate a young person's need for conversation and social bonding (Mazur and Kozarian 2010). Younger people use online spaces, like chat rooms, to express their identity as well as co-construct their identity with those with whom they interacted (Subrahmanyam, Smahel, and Greenfield 2006). This dialectic process of identity formation with others is reminiscent of the dialectical process of identity construction with society that is outlined by Berger and Luckmann (1966). Thus, online communities play an important role in the process of identity co-construction, particularly for young people.

Identity-based blog sites and other online spaces allow people to write about their thoughts and experiences for an audience who presumably understands them. This offers a valuable resource for young people to form and enact their social identities (Chittenden 2010). Participation in online communities and social networking sites is a phenomenon that is embedded within the culture of young people. They are growing up as digital natives who spend a lot of time during their formative years engaged in virtual groups. This online community offers a way to shape individual's self-expression, build their identity, and engage socially with others (Chittenden 2010). Digital communities become unique places where young people can learn about themselves, learn about their relationships to others, and how to form their social identities.

Each person is a member of a variety of different groups or social categories, and this fact is no less true for young people trying to figure out their identity. We may join communities or groups for a variety of different reasons, and these group memberships are important parts of how people view themselves (Simon, Hastedt, and Aufderheide 1997). People tend to join groups or communities based on common interests or characteristics. These are also known as self-aspects which can include things such as physical features, behaviors, attitudes, and group

memberships (Simon and Hastedt 1999). People may perceive themselves and others a certain way depending on those self-aspects. These self-aspects can be things that bond an online community or create division – depending on how someone may self-categorize. These groups can then affect the way people behave toward themselves and others (Simon et al. 1997).

Self-categorization and group membership, as well as the resulting thoughts and behaviors, depends heavily on the social context. For example, people in online communities tend to get along well with others when they share common characteristics. If they do not have anything in common with those in the group, they may leave in search of other groups with people who share their thoughts and views. Those smaller minority groups may even bond over the fact that they don't belong with the majority groups. This then creates a very interesting phenomenon for the members of the minority group. Members of minority groups (in all definitions of the term) tend to self-categorize more than members of majority groups. This may be due to the fact that minority members are more likely to define themselves as part of a group of others who share a characteristic with them than with those who belong to a majority group. Their self-perception becomes depersonalized due to the increased attention given to the characteristic that puts them in a minority category (Simon et al. 1997). This could potentially explain how groups who belong to a numerical minority, such as incels, could have their incelhood become one of the most important parts of their identity. This may be due to the importance of this identity within the social contexts of their online communities. This contributes to an online mindset where being an incel, identifying as an incel, and belonging to a group of incels is more important to a person than identifying as an individual person with many unique qualities. Simon and Hastedt explain that, depending on which of your social aspects is the basis of self-perception at a given moment, such as in a particular social context, a certain working self emerges. If this aspect is

shared with others, but not all people, then this aspect becomes centered in one's self-perception and a collective self or social identity emerges (Simon and Hastedt 1999). Once a social identity emerges around a particular self-aspect, self-stereotyping can occur. In this way, people go through a process of depersonalization and no longer perceive themselves as unique individuals. They are now only seen as group members who share many similarities (Rubin, Milanov, and Paolini 2016).

Online communities can be very positive places. They can form around a common interest or characteristics and provide a place to connect with others and enact a social identity. People within these online spaces can feel a sense of community with those who are also part of the group. This feeling of a sense of community has been associated with greater feelings of social support (O'Connor et al. 2015). Individuals can receive social support from those with whom they have things in common. These individuals may also ask others for advice about issues in their offline lives, as well as seek emotional support from other group members (O'Connor et al. 2015). Although many online communities can be places of support and inclusion, they can also reinforce negative and even potentially dangerous behaviors. For example, online eating disorder communities contain journals or diaries written by people with eating disorders. These entries contain large amounts of information, tips, advice, emotional support, and photos. Although these websites are created so they can form supportive communities, they are controversial as this "supportive content" can encourage and guide others on how to have and conceal an eating disorder (Giles 2006). These websites and communities share many similarities with incel communities and sites. The social identities of the group members are centered around common characteristics that place them in a minority group of people. The identities of group members are constructed through the discourse and dialogue they use to socially construct/ co-construct

this identity. They provide group members emotional and social support. These groups also police the boundaries of their communities to ensure that no outsiders can fully access the group. There are strong notions of in-group and out-group identities. All of this is done, and more, in the unique social context of online groups.

Under the guise of community and support, these groups of incels are co-constructing a toxic identity. Due to their minority status on the Internet, they are quickly becoming a group of people who cannot produce a sense of self and identity outside of their incel-dom.

2.4 Sensitizing Theoretical Perspectives

Previous literature and research on incels have used hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical framework for analysis. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), there is a system of different types of masculinity that come together to form a hierarchy. At the very top of this hierarchy is hegemonic masculinity, which is formed from the different attributes that society has constructed to identify the “ideal man” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Connell and Messerschmidt also theorized about the concept of emphasized femininity, developed as a counterpart to hegemonic masculinity to acknowledge the asymmetrical position of masculinities and femininities and the ways in which femininity focuses on compliance with the patriarchy (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). These theories were useful as a theoretical perspective to examine this ideology of incels and femcels, as well as their beliefs surrounding the social construction of masculinity and femininity.

One theoretical concept that I explore through this research is that of hegemonic femininity. Connell wrote foundational pieces on masculinity, yet an adequate conceptualization of hegemonic femininity has not been developed to the same extent. Schippers (2007) presents a theoretical framework that builds on Connell’s work to offer a new definition of hegemonic

femininity. Schippers defines hegemonic femininity as “the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (2007:94). This definition lends itself to a similar hierarchical structure found within hegemonic masculinity. This study helped to uncover how femcels relate to hierarchies of women and femininity. This theoretical perspective was useful in understanding the ideology of femcels as well as their beliefs surrounding the construction of femininity. This perspective also provided insight into the construction and use of the gender binary in the femcel community.

A more specific theoretical concept I draw on in this research is Goffman’s “presentation of self.” According to Goffman (1959), people in their everyday lives play a variety of roles that other individuals react to. In this theory, Goffman (1959) explains that individuals are constantly engaged in the process of “impression management” where they try to behave or present themselves in a certain way in order to gain a desired response of acceptance from the audience. This was a helpful theoretical concept to guide my analysis as impression management can be done in a variety of different ways on a variety of different platforms, such as an online forum. Femcels present themselves to others both online and in their everyday lives. Femcels may have differing experiences of “fitting in” to the idealized version of womanhood based on their performances of femininity and how others respond to those performances. Using this theoretical concept as a framework allowed me to better understand how femcels present themselves online (and perhaps in real life) and how this influences how they see themselves and how others perceive them.

Another theoretical concept that I used to analyze my data is West and Zimmerman’s “doing gender.” According to this theory, gender is not something that is an innate quality to

human beings. Instead, it is a social construct (West and Zimmerman 1987). West and Zimmerman (1987) explain that gender is something that is performed in our everyday interactions, and is also something that is assessed by those around us. We may be judged on our performances as to whether or not we have performed the socially acceptable version of our gender. This concept relates to Goffman's presentation of self and can be a useful framework through which to examine femcels. These women feel they are performing a gender and femininity that does not live up to the standards of society, and they feel judged for that reason. This framework helped to frame how femcels construct femininity as well as to analyze their beliefs and values.

The last theoretical concept I used to analyze my data in Tajfel and Turner's "social identity theory." This theory explains that a person's sense of who they are is based on their group membership (Tajfel and Turner 2004). The groups that we belong to provide a sense of a social identity, and this is based on perceived similarities and differences with the group we belong to and others not in our group, respectively. Social identity becomes a vital part of an individual (Tajfel and Turner 2004). This theory also explains the construction and co-construction of identities. This theoretical framework was useful in understanding the shared experiences of femcels and how the femcel ideology differs from male incel ideology.

3 METHODS

3.1 Research Questions

To explore my research questions, I conducted a qualitative content analysis informed by grounded theory. I collected my own data from online forum websites that are dedicated to femcels. I used open coding methods to describe the data and identify emerging themes. There

were several sensitizing concepts I used to guide my analysis; these included involuntary celibacy, masculinity, femininity, body image, and self-esteem. Four main research questions guided this study. The first research question (RQ1) is: What are the shared experiences of women who self-identify as incels? The second research question (RQ2) is: How do femcels talk about their experiences? The third research question (RQ3) is: What are the core beliefs and values of femcels? The last research question (RQ4) is: How are femininities and other forms of gender constructed within femcel spaces?

3.2 Data Collection

To collect the data, I used non-participant observation (or lurking). By this, I mean I entered the community via online femcel forums to collect posts and observe interactions, but I did not participate in any conversations or engage with any online forum community members. I collected text-based posts and comments from the forum websites. These are my units of analysis. From each forum webpage, I collected a variety of data. First, I collected the Rules, About, or Frequently Asked Questions section for each page. I collected as many sections as were available from each website. Secondly, I collected the “top” posts and associated comments from each forum. “Top” posts were chosen by sorting the posts on the website into twelve three-month time periods from April 2018 to January 2021 and filtering those posts to show only text-based posts. I then sorted the posts from each of those time periods by number of comments and selected the 15 posts that had the most comments for each period. Third, I collected an additional selection of posts that clarified femcel ideology. These posts were selected based on terms from the sensitizing concepts, as well as those that included narratives of femcel experiences.

3.2.1 Sampling Methods

For this research, I used nonprobability sampling methods. As the data may be interconnected due to the interactive nature of forum websites, there may be issues with the assumption of independence that is necessary for probability sampling (Drisko and Maschi 2016). Due to the exploratory nature of this research, I utilized purposive sampling to collect the data (Drisko and Maschi 2016). As this is a hidden population, and there is no official list of femcel forum websites, I do not have a typical sampling frame. For this reason, I have created my own sampling frame of archived webpages to be used in my sample, which is by no means an exhaustive list of all the web pages that might be out there. I created my sampling frame by using the Wayback Machine¹ to search through banned and archived incel subreddits² for information on femcel pages. This directed me to a website that archives certain banned subreddits. I found two archived subreddits on this website. I then used Google and searched “femcel” and “trufemcel” and located three currently operational web pages dedicated to femcels. However, by the time data collection for this research was conducted, all three active web pages were banned and thus were not able to be included in this research as they do not appear to have been archived or their archives are not available at this time³. As previously stated, I employed a purposive sampling technique that is informed by grounded theory. The sampling technique is a bit more flexible than a fixed, one-time sampling method at the beginning of the study. I used iterative or subsequent sampling when I found that more data were needed during data analysis to reach saturation. Overall, I collected 86 total posts (plus the

¹ The Wayback Machine is a digital archive of the Internet that was founded by the Internet Archive. It allows users to “go back in time” and see how websites looked in the past. I used this tool in order to see pages that have been banned or archived. More information about the Wayback Machine can be found at www.archive.org/web/

² A subreddit is a forum that is dedicated to a specific topic on the website Reddit

³ The banned pages that were not available via archive were www.thepinkpill.co/+trufemcels, www.thepinkpill.co/+asktrufemcels, and www.reddit.com/r/truaskfemcels

comments associated with those posts) between the “top” and selected posts from both web pages. The majority of collected posts came from the main archived web page as this served as the primary forum where femcels would communicate. Information about each webpage, such as when it was created, banned, the rules associated with the page, and some Frequently Asked Questions were also collected to provide insight into these forums.

3.2.2 Construct Measurement

Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that uses inductive analysis as a primary technique. However, researchers who use this technique will often employ the use of “sensitizing concepts” to guide the analysis. Sensitizing concepts provide a theoretical foundation for the development of grounded theory (Bowen 2006). Sensitizing concepts differ from definitive concepts due to their lack of specification. Instead, they give researchers a general sense of guidance to suggest which directions to look in for analysis (Bowen 2006). These concepts tend to be starting points or concepts. Kathy Charmaz describes sensitizing concepts as background ideas that tend to inform the overall research. She further explains that “sensitizing concepts offer ways of seeing, organizing, and understanding experience. Although sensitizing concepts may deepen perception, they provide starting points for building analysis, not ending points for evading it” (Charmaz 2000:515). As such, the sensitizing concepts for this research were used as starting points for analysis and were based on common themes found in the background literature.

As this research deals with involuntary celibacy, that term (as well as incels and femcels) were used as sensitizing concepts. I conceptualize involuntary celibacy as desiring a romantic or sexual relationship but not being able to obtain one as well as the self-identification as someone who is involuntarily celibate. The self-identification as an incel or femcel is a key element to the

more modern ideas of who “qualifies” as involuntarily celibate. The mindset of involuntary celibacy appears to be the focus of these online communities rather than the frequency of relationships a person has or has had in the past.

In addition, ideas surrounding both masculinity and femininity were useful sensitizing concepts to guide my analysis. Many empirical studies have looked at the ways in which incels identify with masculine ideals or the ways they either do or do not perform masculinity. As a result, using similar ideas about femininity helped to guide the analysis of these women-dominated online spaces. In the same vein, body image and self-esteem were also concepts that guided my analysis. These are themes that have emerged from the literature, and I believe they provided a foundation for other emerging themes in this study.

3.3 Data Analysis

For my study, I used NVivo (2020 Release) to organize and categorize my ideas for analysis. I conducted a qualitative content analysis on the data. Qualitative content analysis is a set of techniques that is used for the analysis of not only manifest content, but also themes and core ideas that are found in texts (Drisko and Maschi 2016). My analysis was also informed by aspects of grounded theory. The first step in coding my data was to become very familiar with my data set (Drisko and Maschi 2016). I did this through reading through all data collected without coding to become familiar with the data as well as the different parts of the data that come from separate forums. By immersing myself in the data, I gained a deeper sense of understanding of the context and nuances of the posts. Gaining a fuller understanding of my sample allowed me to make key insights into what content exists or does not exist within the data and whether more data collection was needed. I then began to identify key themes and categories within the data (Drisko and Maschi 2016).

The next step in my analysis was to create codes identifying the main themes within the data which were guided by the insights I gained in the first step (Drisko and Maschi 2016). This step employed open coding of main themes and categories which is the first phase of grounded theory analysis. This step used sensitizing concepts and theoretical perspectives to inform coding themes. This was an iterative process, meaning that I went back and forth between collecting, coding, and analyzing the data. After I coded these main themes, I created subcategories to develop and expand on the main ideas. As this study was exploratory in nature, an inductive coding approach was used. This ensured that codes that emerged were grounded in the data and prioritized the voices of the femcel community (Drisko and Maschi 2016). This process continued until saturation was reached. Throughout this process I compared the data and themes emerging to the existing literature on the men of the incel community. However, as there is no femcel data or literature to compare my analysis to I had to compare emerging themes across my collected data.

There are many strengths to using a qualitative content analysis. This approach is useful in exploring new topics, comparing groups, and developing new theories (Drisko and Maschi 2016). All of these attributes were key to my aims for this research. Qualitative content analysis builds on the strengths of other forms of content analysis while also emphasizing validity and reliability (Drisko and Maschi 2016). However, all research analysis techniques come with some limitations. The content analysis will only be as accurate as my sample data, which means I relied on the forum posters to present accurate information about their experiences and ideologies. I was also only able to observe text posts and interactions and was not able to participate and ask for clarity when needed. This tends to be the nature of conducting research on online communities, especially those with archived pages. I have to take what is posted at face

value as I cannot make any assumptions about the intent of the post or how the post was perceived and influenced others. Without the ability to question the posters, it is difficult to determine what is said with earnest intent and what is said in jest. I cannot confirm whether the people that post on these pages are accurately and truthfully representing themselves online. As such, I will follow the example of the research conducted by Witt (2020). Whether or not the discourse in the community is communicated with serious intent, there will be those that read the content as serious and thus act upon it. For this reason, unless a post is clearly stated as humor, I will assume that the post is serious.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Shared Experiences of Femcels

4.1.1 *Demographics*

Due to the nature of the data that was collected, I was not able to gather detailed demographic information of the femcel population. It appears that there is racial diversity within this population. In one post, femcels were asking if other biracial or mixed-race women had opinions on a subject. In the replies to this post, many of the women disclosed their race such as one user who said, “I’m black and white” or another user who disclosed “I’m a mixed girl” and still another who explained “I’m mixed. I’m Black Hispanic and White” (W1B11P2⁴). Femcels disclosed their race in other posts as well, such as in one post where one woman was talking about dating within her race and explained “Yeah I mean I’m Asian and I love being Asian” (W1B11P1). Other examples of racial diversity include femcels disclosing their race when

⁴ These quotes came from the data I gathered for this research. For each forum post, I developed a unique identification code. The data is organized by the website (W) I collected it from, the time period the data came from, and the individual post. The B in the identification code references from which “batch” or three month time period out of the websites lifespan the post came from. The P references how many posts were collected from that time period with each post being assigned a number based on the order it was collected.

discussing the topic of a particular post, “I’m also foreign (South Asian)” (W1B5P6), “Being a black woman...” (W1B9P2), and “I’m a white femcel myself” (W1B10P2). Although I cannot provide exact numbers, that there are pockets of diversity within these forums, which is consistent with men’s incel forums (Speckhard et al. 2020).

Femcels engage in discussions of race with each other and bond over their shared experiences of race and how this might relate to their femceldom. For example, some femcels believe that their race or ethnicity plays a large role in their femceldom such as one user who states, “My ethnicity and my depression/anxiety are the main reasons I’m a femcel, and in that order” (W1B9P11). This experience is shared with another reply in the same post, “I often feel like my ethnicity plays a large part in why I’m a femcel” (W1B9P11). In this instance, these femcels bond over their shared perception that their ethnicity plays a central role in others’ desire to be in a relationship with them. In other posts, femcels relate to each other and find common ground in comparing their experiences in the dating world and how their race may have played a role. For example, in one post a femcel explains “I assure you, no one is all over me regardless of color” (W1B5P1) and in another post a femcel states “If you think black women are unwanted try being a south Asian girl” (W1B6P4). These women make and engage with posts highlighting their racialized experiences. They share their feelings about how their race played a large role in their inability to find a relationship. Femcels disclose their race and sometimes their ethnic background in order to find community and kinship with those of similar experiences. These posts appear to be predominantly from women of color, and more specifically from black women. In one particular post, two black women engage with a post specifically geared toward the experiences of black women. One states, “Being a black woman is honestly the worst thing in the world. I wish I could’ve been born any other race and if I had to be black why couldn’t I have

been born male?” (W1B9P2) and another woman also comments on this post saying, “Yeah lol I understand where you’re coming from, I feel like black women aren’t even viewed as women anymore, I’m always hearing about we’re at the bottom of the dating pool” (W1B9P2). This perception about black women and their particular troubles in the dating world are further explored in another post which states, “Nobody wants black girls. Nobody.” (W1B6P4).

In terms of marital status, femcels appear to be overwhelmingly single. There are some examples of those who are widowed or previously married, but the vast majority of femcels in these forums were single. This is consistent with the findings from studies on incels (Speckhard et al. 2020). There are some femcels who have dated in the past, and even some who have had sexual and romantic relationships in the past. One woman in the forum explained her past relationships and how that did not exclude her from the femcel label, “Femcel literally means involuntary celibate female. Do I have sex on occasion? Yes. Would I like more? Yes, in the confines of a loving relationship. So at this point I don’t have what I’m looking for so I am involuntarily celibate” (W1B8P6). However, their experiences and self-identification with femcel ideology is what allows them access to this community. Overall, femcels are women who have had little to no experience dating or being in a relationship. They describe femcels and femceldom, “A femcel’s experience is despair. They have never had male attention and they are in their 30s” (W1B5P2). Others reveal their confusion towards relationships in general, “It really baffles me how someone can get a gf/bf. Like it baffles me how people do it” (W1B3P8).

When femcels do describe their experiences with dating or relationships, they often add the caveat that they feel as though this relationship was not valid. They describe to others in their posts that these relationships did not actually mean anything to the person they were supposedly in a relationship with, and that their partner was only dating them in order to use them either for

comfort and companionship, status, or sex. One femcel explains, “No, I never got attention from men. My bf only started showing interested in me 9 months after I confessed feelings for him and 3 days after I confessed, he told me he was going to die alone.” (W1B10P3). They describe how they felt they were being used as “practice girlfriends” whose sole purpose was to allow their partner to practice for their “real” or “actual” girlfriend that they were going to have in the future. “My first and only relationship as a practice gf followed it to a T...” (W1B5P3) and “What are the obvious signs that a guy is just using you for an ‘experience’?” (W1B5P4) were common conversations in some posts. This led to shared stories of feeling used by men, and as if they were not good enough to be anything more than “practice” One femcel pointed out that “The point of femcels is finding a sex [partner] who values you as a human being, rather than sees you as a disappointing practice gf” (W1B4P3).

Based on the conversations between these women and what they have willingly disclosed, there is a wide age range of women in these femcel forums. It appears that the majority of these women are between 20 and 40 years old with some women being older. In two separate posts, two women disclosed their ages by saying “I’m 30+ now...” (W1B11P3) and “I guess I’m a senior citizen then at 43” and “I’m 57...” (W1B8P7). The women in these forums share experiences and express opinions that seem to reflect a population that is over eighteen, such as one user who describes herself, “I am in my 20s and a working professional” (W1B2P1). In fact, members of this online forum tend to discourage those younger or still in high school to not jump into group membership. One user noticed that there seemed to be a surge in younger women joining the group and posted:

Why is there such a huge influx of children here??? I’ve been here since 2018 and it definitely was not like this before. I’m not going to tell you you’re too young to

feel this way, because I know what it's like to be so young and feel so isolated and ugly, but I feel like it's too early to put such a harsh label on yourself. You still have so much potential to grow and change. I don't think anyone under 17 should be here. Especially if you're only like 13/14...Please, talk to someone in real life if you can. (W1B9P9)

There have been times when a woman joins the group and expresses to the group that they feel as though they might be a femcel due to their lived experiences. However, when this woman discloses her age and she is not yet eighteen, other femcels from the group are quick to jump in and offer words of advice. They do not take their own identities as femcels lightly, and they do not want anyone to feel as though they belong to this group if they perceive they have not had enough lived experiences to know whether or not they might be a femcel. Overall, this is done in a very polite and encouraging way. Even though there is a diverse age range in these groups, members of these forums tend to discourage those that are younger or still in high school from jumping into this identity and group membership. Femcels are protective over their space and identity, but they are also willing to educate those that they believe are acting sincerely.

4.1.2 Shared Experiences

It appears that an overwhelming number of femcels are critical of their appearance and bodies. This is a group for those women to come and share their troubles and confide in others about the issues they face, evident in the overall tone of the group discussions. For example, many posts revolve around the women's physical features. One user summed up their experience by saying, "As a woman, your whole life is your face" (W1B10P1). However, there are almost no instances in which femcels discuss or believe themselves to have high self-esteem. These women have faced many years of not feeling as though they belong in their offline society,

especially in regards to their appearance. In one post about the experience of femcels in South Korea, one user stated, “I’m Korean and grew up in Korea and this post really hit home for me. If you’re ugly people will straight up tell you...the people saying this can even be teachers or friends[‘] parents” (W1B10P7). They have faced repeated rejection from potential suitors, but also from their families. They have either heard or experienced their relatives speak negatively about them (either in terms of looks or personality) or they perceive that others are speaking or thinking negatively about them. In one post, a femcel writes, “It’s not just men I worry about. Other women, customer service employees, my own family, etc look down on me for being ugly” (W1B4P3).

Over time, this has led to low levels of self-esteem and low levels of confidence. When these women join these forums, they are looking for others who have similar experiences. They want the validation of their experience and the hardship in their life. One femcel declares that “Trufemcels is a space for FEMCELS, and we all know damn well that your face is your life. I don’t want to be a trophy wife or a model. I want to be treated like a human being, and I am not treated like one because I am an ugly woman” (W1B10P1). Often, these discussions become group therapy for the participants and the readers. Femcels engaging in these threads share their own experience and receive support and validation. They also use these threads to encourage and reassure other femcels. This support is met with mixed results. Some femcels welcome the encouragement and are appreciative of the words of their peers. For instance, a femcel will express feeling low confidence about their looks, and other femcels will challenge these negative interpretations. These women will seek out photos from prior posts and point out the positive features of self-loathing femcels and try to reassure them. In some cases, the original femcel expresses gratitude for the support. Other times, when this common interaction occurs, some

femcels react negatively, and reiterate their negative view of themselves. Although they might express appreciation for the support, they feel too damaged to believe that others could view them positively. A good illustration of this is in one post where a femcel is lamenting after receiving a low rating on a subreddit that rates others based on their appearance. She posts, “You know you’re ugly when truerateme rates you a three...” To this, one user asserts “uh, you’re fucking beautiful. I’d kill for your face.” To this, the original poster both thanks the commenter and reinforces her negative views on her appearance. She responds, “Aww, thank you! That’s very sweet!! Tbh, I personally feel very ugly at the moment and I really feel the need to vent my anger/sadness towards [men] incels and I feel comfortable on this subreddit” (W1B10P1).

There are three overwhelmingly negative perspectives on these forums: hopelessness, loneliness, and nihilism. These women express frustration with the trajectory of their lives (often in more than just their romantic life) and feel as though there is no hope for them to experience any form of success. For example, one femcel shares, “I sometimes feel really jealous of teenage Stacy’s⁵ the world is at their feet and they are going to have the school experience, boyfriend experience and educational experience that I’ll never get” (W1B5P6). In one post, a femcel asks if others share in her experience of being completely ignored by men, “Anyone else get no male attention at all? Platonic, romantic, sexual, even just basic acknowledgement?” (W1B8P6). This is a common conversation within these forums. In other posts, femcels can find kinship with others when expressing their loneliness, “This hits hard. Sometimes I think I’m just not meant to be around other people but deep down I know that I am incredibly lonely” (W1B3P8). They express their sadness and lean on this online support group to provide them comfort in their low

⁵ Per incels.wiki, a “Stacy” is an attractive woman that does not have any issues securing sexual or romantic relationships. This term entered the incel lexicon to caricature the “high value” woman that is hated and envied by incels and femcels alike.

times such as in these two replies in separate threads where femcels thank their fellow forum members for reading about their situations and leaving supportive replies. One states, “Thank you for not being too judgmental,” (W1B10P6) while another says, “(((Hugs))) It’s such a relief for one to know they aren’t alone. Thank you.” (W1B4P6).

Second, a common experience among femcels is the feeling of loneliness. Loneliness is what bonds these women to each other and is what they all share. There are many posts throughout these forums that include phrases like, “Then why am I still alone?”, “...perpetually and permanently alone...” (W1B5P1), and “I also feel lonely” (W1B5P6). These women express a variety of reasons for their loneliness. Some women turn to these groups as support for their lack of experience or rejection from romantic and sexual relationships. One user reveals that she wishes her “brain was normal” (W1B3P8); she wishes she could change who she is in order to find success in relationships. Her loneliness in life is leading her to the conclusion that there must be something wrong with her brain. That is the only explanation she sees for her overwhelming loneliness. This loneliness might be the catalyst by which many seek out the femcel community. However, once they are a part of this online community, these women tend to divulge a deeper overall loneliness. It is not just that they do not have a partner; they do not have anyone. One woman states, “I’ll never be in a relationship or have children. It’s over for me,” (W1B3P6). Some discuss strained relationships with their family members or their lack of close friends in their offline lives. One femcel expounds “Sometimes I think normies⁶ just have it easier because they are more compatible with a larger subset of people, and on worse days I will even tell myself it’s because I am too introspective, too THOUGHTFUL to be compatible...” (W1B3P8). These women feel invisible. They feel no one cares about them. This has led these

⁶ Per incels.wiki, a “normie” is an average person. It is often used as a pejorative or derogatory term in the incelosphere to describe someone who is not remarkable in any way and tends to like all things “mainstream”

women to seek out this online group. They are holding onto their last bit of hope that someone out there will see them and show them kindness and friendship. This is the reason this group was created. One femcel post demonstrates this by stating “I think what most people, regardless of gender, truly want and need is real companionship, true understanding and the feeling of actual love.” (W1B9P1). This group provides a shared space where these women can try to feel less alone.

The third worldview that is shared by some femcels is bitterness and nihilism. These women are past the point of hopelessness and sadness. For example, one femcel explains “I get zero respect no matter what I do, it makes life seem pretty meaningless, I’m basically watching everyone else live even when I’m in the middle of the action everyone just looks past me” (W1B8P6). Instead, they cope with their experiences by turning instead to disdain. They feel like it does not even matter anymore whether or not they are perceived as desirable by others. They claim not to want attention from men whom they have decided are not worth their time. In one post, a femcel writes:

i dont believe in true love or romantic love like that anymore, its [sic] so fake. life is just one big shitty lie. thank god i wont be alive that long anyways and thank god im ugly so i wont [sic] at least experience being cheated on by a man or reach our 30s/40s and have the “love of my life” lusting after more beautiful women. (W1B10P3).

Femcels like this one believe they will be alone for the rest of their lives and are resigned to this outcome.

Sometimes, though, this nihilism does reach the point of suicidality. Femcels disclose they are not concerned anymore with romantic relationships because they are struggling to find

motivation to live. They seek comfort or validation from others in the group in their decision making. In one post (W1B5P7), a femcel asks if “anyone else [is] going to rope this year” by which she is asking if others are thinking about dying by suicide. In the same post, another femcel replies and says “I’m going to do it next week. I can’t live life if this is it.” The women are met with a variety of responses on these types of posts. In some instances, other femcels provide a supportive presence and will express this by saying things such as, “Hope you find peace in whatever you do next week.” Others, though, try to offer encouragement that their situation is not so bad that they should consider suicide. The women will flood the replies to these posts with responses such as: “Please don’t kill yourself, life can get better” (W1B5P7).

4.2 How Femcels Talk About Their Experiences

It is important to understand the common lived experiences of femcels. What is also important, though, is how femcels talk about their common lived experiences. This is where I found an interesting divergence from the existing literature on involuntary celibacy. I have observed that there is a distinct way in which femcels talk about their experiences which is that they tend to internalize their thoughts and feelings.

Femcels internalize their experience of involuntary celibacy. Although they are aware that beauty standards, the patriarchy, and society in general may contribute to their experiences, femcels focus on their personal faults. For example, one femcel commented on the experience of street harassment by saying: “I completely get where they’re coming from and in theory I agree that being catcalled is probably gross, but in reality I crave the attention, actually being seen as a sexual being for once.” (W1B10P8). However, instead of turning their frustrations outwards – like men incels, they instead turn them in on themselves. Femcels lament that they are not doing enough in order to change their own lives. One woman describes her situation by saying “Sadly,

its [*sic*] not really easy and sometimes impossible to change your personality or else you are just faking someone who you are not. I know I will never be confident, happy, talkative, or loud. That's just not me" (W1B9P4). They express frustration in how whatever they do is not enough to overcome the deep flaws that they believe that they have. They do not focus on how the world or others can change to accommodate them or to be more understanding of their experiences. Instead, these women ruminate and dwell on how they will never be able to live up to the ideals of femininity and beauty as expressed through traditional (Western) beauty standards. They may recognize that society is not fair to them, but they still see this as a flaw on their part and not on the fault of society. One femcel reveals that "I can be as charismatic as possible yet I will still be alone...imagine being completely isolated, never having a boyfriend, girlfriend, or just regular friends for that matter. And the only thing holding [you] back is something you can not [*sic*] change...Its [*sic*] like being trapped in a body that is cursed" (W1B10P6). There is a cognitive dissonance between what femcels know to be true and what they feel is the truth from their own lived experiences. Femcels grasp the concept that living in patriarchal societies with hard-to-obtain beauty standards impacts how they view themselves and how other people view them. However, this understanding is coupled with a deeply ingrained belief that, despite everything they know, femcels cause their own problems.

4.3 Beliefs and Values

For the incel community, the main hierarchy that is the topic of frequent discussion is that of the hierarchy of masculinity. This hierarchy is based on the ideals of masculinity in Western society and the concept of hegemonic masculinity. These men believe that there is a societal hierarchy that dictates what a man is supposed to be and how he should look and act. They have a belief that this hierarchy is not something that they designed for themselves, but one that has

been forced upon them. They seek support from their community as these are all individuals who feel as though they cannot conform to this masculine standard in one way or another (Ging 2019; Glace et al. 2021; O'Donnell 2021). Because they feel rejected by society due to these unfair standards placed upon them, there is the tendency for incels to turn their rejection outward. They externalize their rejection and transform it into outward frustration and anger towards society and those they feel had any say in creating this hierarchy of masculinity which includes women, but also other men who incels feel have benefitted the most from this hierarchy and thus have a vested interest in maintaining it.

There are a few hierarchies present in the femcel community. These women measure themselves against a hierarchy of femininity and womanhood. They discuss the ideals of femininity that exist in society (both in their own individual cultures, but broadly in terms of Westernized ideals of beauty) and share in their frustration at their inability to conform to these ideals. One states: "I feel that I am a standard femcel in some ways. I'm not the societal standard of what is hot" (W1B8P6). Another shares that she does not feel she falls into the hierarchy of femininity in Western culture or in her own (which is not mentioned). She states, "By western standards I'm regular ugly but by my culture's standards I'm ogre tier" (W1B9P11).

These women view their inability to conform to certain standards of femininity as a character or moral flaw. One femcel reveals, "I feel like someone like me shouldn't even try to get in a relationship because I'm just going to poison other people with my negativity and bitterness" (W1B10P5). They believe they are the ones to blame in this situation, and not the patriarchal hierarchy that has been forced upon them. Femcels see their need for human connection as the center of their problems. One femcel shares, "God I kinda wish I didn't crave male attention tbh" (W1B10P8). In this way, this internalization has led to the maintenance and

perpetuation of these hierarchical ideas of femininity and womanhood. These women do not realize they are trapping themselves into this hierarchy that they blame themselves for not fitting into. In one post, a femcel asks others if they feel the same way as she does regarding harassment. She asks, “Anyone else feel strange for not experiencing stuff like street harassment? And other ‘female’ experiences?” (W1B11P3). In this way, she divulges that she wants to experience street harassment because it will help her to not feel so left out of this hierarchy of femininity, which, in turn, perpetuates certain ideas of what it means to be a woman.

The second hierarchy that has emerged from this data is one that has been created entirely by the femcels. This hierarchy centers around the validity of the woman’s femceldom. This idea is illustrated on the “front page” of the femcel forum by announcing that this is a place for the “Truest of femcels” (www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels). In a group that places a lot of value in identity and seeks to provide validation for the identities of femcels, this idea of a femcel hierarchy seems almost hypocritical. Some of the women within this group point this out themselves. In the Frequently Asked Question section of the website, it states that “No femcel will have her thoughts or feelings dismissed or trivialized by outsiders...This sub is your home to be you” (Trufemcels FAQ). However, in other posts it appears as though there has been some disagreement among members which results in the dismissal of some members’ thoughts and feelings. One user explains: “The sub shouldn’t be like this. Shouldn’t we all try to be kind and understanding to each other? I thought this sub was a place to escape being judged on superficial characteristics, but here we are” (W1B11P1). The purpose of this forum is for the women to find support and validation in their identity. However, this does not change the fact that there is rampant policing of identity and femceldom within these online spaces. Some women’s femceldom is seen as more valid than others. This validity appears to be based on who “has it

worse” than others based on their lived experiences. There have been a few instances on these forums where femcels are warned by moderators of the sites to stop comparing who has it worse in their lives. One moderator explained, “Oppression Olympics are not allowed on the femcel sub” (W1B2P2).

The way femcels determine or debate who is more of a femcel than another could be based on a variety of factors. For example, the race of a woman might influence how much of a femcel she is or how others perceive her to be. This idea is especially prevalent in conversations surrounding white femcels. One user declares, “I don’t think white women can be femcel tbh” (W1B5P1). In another post, a femcel explains that white women’s femceldom is less valid because they are not judged as harshly for their looks. She explains “White women can get away with being ugly, the standards for them are much lower” (W1B11P2). This rhetoric is shared among many of the women in the community who believe that their racialized experiences with involuntary celibacy make their femceldom more valid than others. This can especially be seen in posts that are made by Black women. One woman explained that “The issue for black women is that being beautiful is not enough to save us bc of unjust racial hierarchies and stereotypes” (W1B11P1). In many other posts, women will share this common viewpoint that being a black woman leads to particular difficulties in the world of beauty, femininity, and relationships. Other factors that might influence a woman’s standings in the femcel hierarchy could be her weight, her experiences dating, her region, her mental health, and more. For example, one user claims that “Well groomed femcel + charismatic personality = cannot be femcel” (W1B4P6) which implies that you cannot be a femcel if you are able to present yourself in a way that is societally appropriate and have a charismatic personality. In other posts, femcels will police femceldom based on if users divulge their past relationships. One user states: “I thought this was a subreddit

for femcels but there are women who had sex and relationships here. Can we kick them out?” (W1B4P3). Overall, what I have found is that although the community for femcels was created with the intention of escaping hierarchies, these hierarchies still persist in various forms and are maintained through the policing of members by other members. This is similar to men incel communities as they also resist hierarchies placed upon them, but reinforce hierarchies through policing of identity. The main difference between the two is that femcels turn their anger towards themselves and those they feel do not belong in their group, while men turn their anger towards women and others they perceive as creating the hierarchies.

What is important to femcels and what drives this community’s existence? One of the first themes that can be noted from this research is that there is a strong emphasis on a safe community. In the Frequently Asked Questions page on the forum, it is explained that “The women who come here come to vent, relax, and to be free of [male visitors’] thoughts and input” (Trufemcels FAQ). These women feel lonely and are searching for others who might share in their experiences. In essence, they are creating the space that they need. One femcel explains “Just because someone may have a different experience doesn’t invalidate their pain or make them any less worthy of being a part of a supportive community” (W1B4P3). Femcels yearn for a community that they can devote their time and energy to. These groups are more than a collection of individuals posting in isolation. The dialogue between femcels is possible because they have so much in common in terms of their lived experiences. As a result, they feel they are in a safe environment to share those personal thoughts that they do not feel they can express in their offline lives. Their femcel forums create a safe environment where they feel listened to and not alone in the world. As such, they value the sense of community that comes with belonging to these online groups. One femcel explained: “The ultimate fact is that we are all human here on

this sub, regularly and overwhelmingly treated as sub-human by all the conventions of society, so we don't need to do the same thing to each other that the rest of the world does to us already," (W1B9P6).

These women also experience acceptance in their online community. Femcels often do not feel as though they are not accepted by those around them in the "real" outside world for a variety of reasons. They may not feel they are accepted due to their physical characteristics or the fact that they do not fit into the "traditional" or "ideal" beauty standards. They may not feel accepted as they do not have the same experiences in life, especially in terms of dating, as those around them. However, when they are in these femcel forums, they feel accepted. One femcel states: "Our experiences may contradict each other but that doesn't invalidate either of them" (W1B9P6). They are comforted in knowing they are not the only one who experiences these hardships. They feel accepted by these other women who also feel the same way that they do. They especially appreciate when they have a space to speak about their experiences such as one user who explains "Good thing I'm on the trufemcel sub where our struggles, suffering, and unique female obstacles are not muted over the deafening ree of Braincels." (W1B2P4). These women have often felt shunned or "left out" of the experiences that women are "supposed" to have experienced at this point in their life. So, they value the acceptance and validation that comes with belonging to this community because they know that they are not alone.

Through it all, femcels were and are seeking support that they could not find in their offline lives. In one post, a femcel discloses her own issues with an eating disorder on a post talking about weight. She replies "Wow, that's horrible. As someone that used to struggle with an ED I know how touchy you can feel about weight afterwards. I hope you felt okay after and didn't feel tempted towards relapse. You're strong for your recovery" (W1B10P2). Issues

surrounding weight and eating disorders can be very sensitive topics and are not often discussed offline. However, these women feel safe enough to disclose potentially triggering information with each other in order to provide support. In other instances, femcels may discuss their issues with connecting to people in their daily lives. One femcel provided some encouragement and advice to another when she said “I truly believe you’re kind and that no one really hates you :) ...try not to have any motives and talk to them in mini convos. Like saying hi and asking what they did over the weekend” (W1B3P8). In another post, a femcel replies to the original poster who shared a story about her mom and said “Wow! This [is] an incredibly inspirational story. I am so proud of both you and your mom, for all you [have] accomplished.” The original poster then replied to this and said, “That’s so sweet of you...I really appreciate you took the time to make such a sweet comment, thank you it made my day” (W1B9P4). Throughout all these posts we can see femcels reaching out for support and receiving it from their fellow women.

4.4 Femininity and Gender in Femcel Spaces

I went into researching this community expecting to find parallels with the incel community. Within the incel community, there is a lot of discussion about masculinity and the ways in which incels feel as though they do not fit into the hegemonic ideals of masculinity (Maxwell et al. 2020; O’Donnell 2021). While femininity was something mentioned within these forums, what actually dominated conversations was the concept of gender, more specifically womanhood. In this case, femininity is something that is performed and that reinforces the norms that are associated with women. Womanhood is seen as an identity that is validated through the “correct” performance of femininity. What does it mean to be a woman? And are these femcels actually seen as women in society if they do not have the same experiences as other women that do not identify as femcel? While reading through conversations, I found many echoing the same

sentiments. These women did not even feel as though they were seen as people, let alone women. One user explained that “Ugly women aren’t seen as human” (W1B10P1). Femcels did not only feel lonely in their offline lives due to their lack of romantic and sexual relationships, but they also felt lonely because they were not being acknowledged at all. Another femcel shared her sentiments by saying “I think that’s the ugly girl experience: people, especially men, don’t notice you exist” (W1B8P6). These women would often describe to their fellow femcels that they did not feel as though people recognized their existence, let alone the fact that they were a woman trying to find connections with others. This overlapped with conversations surrounding sexual harassment from people on the street. These women do not want to be harassed, yet they feel this would somehow provide the validation that others see them as women. For instance, one femcel states “Yea[h]. I don’t really want to be harassed, but at the same time I do. I think I just want some sort of validation that I’m a woman.” Another woman comments on the same post: “I’m 30+ now and I’m still sad about not ever having experienced any form of harassment or other unwanted attention. It makes me feel like less of a woman” (W1B11P3). Their conversations were full of encouragement and similar experiences on this specific issue. For example, one femcel also commented on this thread and said, “Yup. I cant [sic] believe I even feel hurt that im [sic] not harassed lol. The world is so shit for this to be a measurement of womanhood and attractiveness for women,” (W1B11P3). This means that femcels would turn to their online community of femcels to validate their own womanhood. They relied on these women to validate their gender, as well as their personhood.

5 DISCUSSION

Overall, there has been an increase in the research and literature that has been conducted on incels. However, the same cannot be said for the femcel community. The research on incels

has focused on identifying who this group is, the core beliefs they have, and why they have been radicalized in a way that leads towards violent tendencies (Ging 2019; Glace et al. 2021; Maxwell et al. 2020; O'Donnell 2021; Williams et al. 2021; Witt 2020). There has not been the same level of attention paid to the especially hidden side to this already hidden population: femcels. As such, I have begun to address this large gap in the literature by conducting an exploratory study of women who self-identify as involuntarily celibate.

Although no statistics could be obtained at this time, I have found that there are pockets of racial diversity within this population. Femcels would disclose their race or ethnicity in order to share how their race has influenced their experiences as femcels. The women of shared racial or ethnic groups could then bond with each other over their similar racialized experiences. In terms of marital status, femcels appear to be overwhelmingly single. There are those who have some history or experience with sexual or romantic relationships, but at the time they are in this forum they are single. However, when femcels share their past relationships, they often describe how they felt as though the relationship was not valid or that they were being used as a “practice” girlfriend. I was not able to ascertain exact ages for femcels, but it appears most of the women are between 20 and 40 years old with a few women older than 40. Members of this forum often discourage those younger than 18 from joining the group as they feel they do not want anyone young to rush into labeling themselves. Femcels often mention that they have very low self-esteem due to their physical characteristics. Femcels will often turn to each other in this forum to vent about their experiences in order to gain support and encouragement. However, even with this community and support, there are still strong feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, and even nihilism within this forum.

In previous literature on the incel community, there is always discussion about the hateful and often violent conversations that are shared (O'Malley et al. 2020; Williams et al. 2021; Witt 2020). These men are angry at the world; they are angry at women; and they are angry in general. These men must release this anger and hatred through incel groups. These groups tend to be places externalized anger is enthusiastically endorsed (Ging 2019; Glace et al. 2021; O'Donnell 2021). These men blame society, Western ideals of masculinity, and the men that they wish they could be. But most of all, these men blame women. This anger is externalized, but it does tend to stay within their online groups. However, there are times when this externalized anger breaks free from the Internet and becomes reality for these men and for the people they choose to blame. We can make connections between these incel communities and instances of mass violence or targeted violence in the real world. There are even discussions among legislators on the potential threat of these men, so much so that they are classified as hate groups and have the potential to be classified as domestic terrorist groups (Tomkinson et al. 2020). Incels cannot even seem to entertain the thought that their own issues may be the result of their own behavior. It is easier for incels to believe they are the victims of a societal flaw than that they have the agency to change their lives. When femcels share their lived experiences with others, it differs from the existing literature on incels. Femcels tend to internalize their feelings. These women are aware of society's role in their lives, but they turn their frustration inward and blame themselves. As a result, a femcel's (perceived) inability to fit into societal standards of beauty and femininity are a flaw on their part and is one that is unlikely to change.

Existing literature has focused on the values and belief systems of incels (Daly and Reed 2021; Ging 2019; Glace et al. 2021; O'Donnell 2021; Witt 2020). My research has begun to fill the gap in research on the values and beliefs of femcels. Similar to the incel community

(O'Donnell 2021), femcels believe in inherent hierarchies. One such hierarchy relates to the performance of Western beauty standards. These women share with others their frustration at their perceived inability to conform to those ideals. Femcels have also created their own hierarchy within their own group wherein they police each as members. This appears hypocritical as each femcel is seeking support and validation in their identities. Yet, this hierarchy is something that is both forced upon these women by outside forces (like incels) yet maintained and reinforced by femcels themselves.

Another goal of this research was to determine the values of this group. Previous research often argued that women could not be involuntarily celibate (Maxwell et al. 2020; Preston et al. 2021). This led to confused feelings for these women. They were experiencing something that they felt was not possible. These women felt lonely in their offline lives and were searching for others who might share in what they are experiencing. This is potentially why they sought out these online groups in the first place; they wanted to try to validate their experiences and their identity as someone who was involuntarily celibate. They were reassured when they found they were not the only ones. In a community where so many feel alone and ostracized, they created the validation that each one of them needed. This can be confusing to grasp as there is also gatekeeping of this validation until one can “prove” they really are a femcel. Still, femcels value their community and, as a result, there is a strong emphasis on community throughout this forum. Subsequently, these women also value acceptance despite the cognitive dissonance within their hierarchical structure. Femcels may not feel as though they are accepted or “fit in” in the “real” world. However, when they are with their fellow femcels, they feel accepted. They find comfort in each other because they know they are not alone. Appropriately, femcels also value validation. These women feel as though they are alone in their experiences or that they are outliers. They

felt reassured when they found out they were not the only ones that felt the way they did. They feel overwhelmingly rejected by those around them, but this online forum is one of the few places where they can turn to someone else for advice and encouragement.

This research ended up being about more than just femininity and beauty standards in the femcel community. The conversations in these forums ended up being about womanhood, and more broadly personhood. What does it mean to be a woman and can a femcel be a woman if she does not share in certain lived experiences? These women felt lonely in their offline lives as they could not find romantic or sexual partners. However, they described a deeper sense of loneliness as they felt they were not perceived by others at all. Their femceldom made them invisible to others, which made these women doubt their womanhood and personhood. As a result, these women turned to each other for that validation and support as they tried to navigate their own gender and in turn their lives.

While an exploratory content analysis was the best method for this study, that does not mean it comes without certain limitations. Content analyses, as previously stated, are only as accurate as the sample data. This means that I must rely on forum posters to represent themselves and their viewpoints in an accurate way. As I could only observe text-based posts, I was not able to participate with forum users and ask them for clarity on their viewpoints. I must take what is posted at face value and I cannot make assumptions about the intent behind posts or how others might read and receive these posts. In future studies, I would like to perform more detailed analysis on these forum posts as well as conducting interviews with forum members in order to gain more understanding of femcel communities. Overall, this research added to the existing body of knowledge of involuntary celibacy and the online communities of incels and femcels. We now have a more detailed understanding of the shared experiences of femcels, how they talk

about their lives, what they value, and their views towards gender and femininity. This study has contributed to the sociological understanding of online communities and the identity construction that occurs within them.

6 CONCLUSION

The incel community was once one that welcomed all who struggled with finding sexual or romantic relationships. Over time, this community was co-opted by the Men's Rights Movement and the alt-right. The women that were once recognized as valid members of the online support community were forced out and were stripped of their incel identity. As a result, they created their own online safe haven to re-claim their incel identity and transform it into what we see now as the contemporary femcel identity. Although niche, my research did more than simply build on the existing knowledge of incels. This research enhanced and expanded the literature of gender, sexuality, and identity. My study examined the ways in which identity is constructed and co-constructed in online spaces. I found that the validation and acceptance of this co-constructed identity in online spaces is meaningful to the femcel community and is not a concept that has yet been theorized.

In addition, my study explored and added to the literature on "doing gender." The femcels on these online forums had complicated ideas on the performances of idealized femininity and how this constructed a version of womanhood that was not seen as "valid" in broader society. In the same way that men incel communities formed as a result of these men not performing hegemonic masculinity up to societal standards, femcel communities formed when women felt as though they could not perform the idealized hegemonic femininity. These online forums were used to legitimize the identities of women that were denied womanhood due to their alternative performances of femininity.

Furthermore, my study narrowed the gendered gap in research that is all too common in research studies. Through this, I have been able to illustrate that women are using these online forums in distinct ways. Incels and femcels, though once a part of the same population, are now two separate groups and identities who are united only in their shared involuntary celibacy.

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APPENDIX

This table can be used as a reference to identify what posts and responses are discussed throughout this research.

ID	Website	Post
W1B1P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I Dated an Incel for Two Years” Posted June 29,2018. 99 comments.
W1B1P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“A man gets judged on many qualities” Posted June 27, 2018. 99 comments.
W1B1P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Does anyone here ignore Chads completely” Posted June 22, 2018. 84 comments.
W1B1P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“For anybody whose confused” Posted June 3, 2018. 157 comments.
W1B1P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“What age do women hit the wall” Posted May 30, 2018. 98 comments.
W1B2P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Reddit has destroyed men for me” Posted September 1, 2018. 104 comments.
W1B2P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Is it common for femcels to hate men” Posted August 8, 2018. 120 comments.
W1B2P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“If you despise incels” Posted July 21, 2018. 108 comments.
W1B2P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“In what way can being used” Posted July 15, 2018. 113 comments.
W1B2P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“More suifuel for blackfemcels”

		Posted July 14, 2018. 153 comments.
W1B3P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Why are you ugly” Posted December 30, 2018. 103 comments.
W1B3P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Petite girls are the ultimate suifuel” Posted December 25, 2018. 76 comments.
W1B3P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Can we talk hot bodies on femcels” Posted December 12, 2018. 84 comments.
W1B3P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Seriously is marriage even worth it” Posted December 9, 2018. 51 comments.
W1B3P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Incel kills again” Posted November 3, 2018. 52 comments.
W1B3P6	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I just realized I’m a femcel” Posted October 16, 2018. 54 comments.
W1B3P7	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“You know you’re ugly when” Posted October 8, 2018. 87 comments.
W1B3P8	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“How to get a gf/bf?” Posted October 7, 2018. 72 comments.
W1B4P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Saw something really toxic on here” Posted March 25, 2019. 177 comments.
W1B4P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Daily reminder” Posted March 24, 2019. 57 comments.
W1B4P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Are there any real femcels in this sub” Posted March 17, 2019. 71 comments.

W1B4P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Unpopular opinions part 3” Posted March 16, 2019. 137 comments.
W1B4P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Larping moids and normies” Posted February 26, 2019. 86 comments.
W1B4P6	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Do most people in this sub have a mental illness” Posted February 24, 2019. 52 comments.
W1B4P7	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Best way to get a man as a femcel” Posted February 12, 2019. 61 comments.
W1B4P8	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Anyone else boobcels?” Posted February 2, 2019. 102 comments.
W1B4P9	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Distrustful of men” Posted January 6, 2019. 60 comments.
W1B4P10	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Dear incels” Posted January 1, 2019. 80 comments.
W1B5P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I don’t think white women can be femcel tbh” Posted June 26, 2019. 105 comments.
W1B5P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I’m a sex worker, but I am still a femcel” Posted June 10, 2019. 71 comments.
W1B5P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Sex and relationships are degrading and disgusting” Posted May 25, 2019. 113 comments.

W1B5P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“What are the obvious signs” Posted May 11, 2019. 94 comments.
W1B5P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Why is everyone here so transphobic” Posted May 1, 2019. 65 comments.
W1B5P6	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Unpopular opinions 4” Posted April 12, 2019. 79 comments.
W1B5P7	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Anyone else going to rope this year” Posted June 8, 2019. 51 comments.
W1B6P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Red pillers and red pill women” Posted September 12, 2019. 45 comments.
W1B6P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Getting a bf as a girl is super easy” Posted August 19, 2019. 43 comments.
W1B6P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“The older I get” Posted August 15, 2019. 21 comments.
W1B6P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I think naomi is cope” Posted August 13, 2019. 40 comments.
W1B6P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Anybody else notice female beauty is objective” Posted July 30, 2019. 38 comments.
W1B6P6	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Is it just me or” Posted July 29, 2019. 58 comments.
W1B7P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I’ve wasted two hours” Posted October 3, 2019. 63 comments.

W1B7P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“The advice in r female dating strategy” Posted November 20, 2019. 40 comments.
W1B7P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Intermittent fasting and weight loss” Posted November 5, 2019. 30 comments.
W1B7P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Considering fat femcels on here” Posted October 16, 2019. 40 comments.
W1B7P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“The double standard” Posted October 31, 2019. 29 comments.
W1B8P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Femcels, have you ever seen a woman” Posted March 24, 2020. 57 comments.
W1B8P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“The way that men on reddit” Posted March 13, 2020. 50 comments.
W1B8P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Pretty girls have it so easy” Posted March 6, 2020. 44 comments.
W1B8P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“The most useful thing a parent can do” Posted March 2, 2020. 59 comments.
W1B8P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Males acting like I'm a cockblock” Posted February 18, 2020. 55 comments.
W1B8P6	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Anyone else get no male attention at all” Posted February 1, 2020. 47 comments.
W1B8P7	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Do you care about the wall” Posted January 28, 2020. 43 comments.
W1B9P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“From MGTOW”

		Posted June 24, 2020. 42 comments.
W1B9P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I hate being black” Posted June 21, 2020. 58 comments.
W1B9P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I hate colorism” Posted May 27, 2020. 38 comments.
W1B9P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“My mom was a normie” Posted May 17, 2020. 55 comments.
W1B9P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“If I see one more” Posted May 16, 2020. 71 comments.
W1B9P6	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Anyone else tired” Posted May 9, 2020. 73 comments.
W1B9P7	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“What conventionally attractive feature” Posted May 5, 2020. 85 comments.
W1B9P8	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Why are there so many” Posted May 1, 2020. 79 comments.
W1B9P9	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Why is there such a huge influx of children” Posted April 29, 2020. 45 comments.
W1B9P10	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I love men” Posted April 26, 2020. 96 comments.
W1B9P11	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“For POC minority femcels” Posted April 22, 2020. 65 comments.
W1B9P12	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Lookism in other cultures” Posted April 9, 2020. 42 comments.

W1B9P13	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Stacies appropriating” Posted April 7, 2020. 64 comments.
W1B9P14	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Black women and femceldom” Posted April 7, 2020. 47 comments.
W1B10P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“As a woman, your whole life is your face” Posted December 29, 2020. 65 comments.
W1B10P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Can the white girls on this sub” Posted December 26, 2020. 64 comments.
W1B10P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Men are unable to love” Posted December 8, 2020. 49 comments.
W1B10P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Men will do absolutely anything” Posted December 6, 2020. 43 comments.
W1B10P5	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I feel like I'm living” Posted November 29, 2020. 45 comments.
W1B10P6	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I catfished a guy” Posted November 28, 2020. 58 comments.
W1B10P7	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I feel bad for Korean femcels” Posted November 22, 2020. 46 comments.
W1B10P8	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Stacys and beckys always complaining” Posted November 18, 2020. 53 comments.
W1B10P9	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Not me wanting to kill myself” Posted November 16, 2020. 24 comments.
W1B10P10	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Pretty privilege”

		Posted November 14, 2020. 62 comments.
W1B10P11	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Hot white chad” Posted November 13, 2020. 68 comments.
W1B10P12	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“My therapist has washed her hands of me” Posted November 11, 2020. 74 comments.
W1B10P13	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Suifuel new teacher” Posted November 8, 2020. 46 comments.
W1B10P14	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“I can’t stop thinking” Posted October 28, 2020. 31 comments.
W1B11P1	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Can some of the white femcels” Posted January 1, 2021. 75 comments.
W1B11P2	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Any other biracial lightskin girls” Posted January 1, 2021. 66 comments.
W1B11P3	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Anyone else feel strange” Posted January 11, 2021. 31 comments.
W1B11P4	www.reddit.com/r/trufemcels	“Any famous celebrities” Posted January 11, 2021. 34 comments.
W2B1P1	www.reddit.com/r/asktrufemcels	“Why not just date incels” Posted January 11, 2021. 45 comments.
W2B1P2	www.reddit.com/r/asktrufemcels	“Am I an ex femcel” Posted January 9, 2021. 6 comments.
W2B1P3	www.reddit.com/r/asktrufemcels	“Have any of you tried a therapist” Posted January 9, 2021. 13 comments.

