

Abstract

Primarily active in online spaces, involuntary celibates (incels) are mostly male individuals who experience frustration through their perceived inability to establish romantic or sexual relationship. In recent years incels received increased public attention because of acts of mass violence, perpetrated by self-identified incels. The thesis uses Robert Kozinet's methodology of online netnography to examine the intersection of involuntary celibate identity and race. Utilising Van Veelen's Integrative Model of Social Identification, the project focuses on the construction of incel identity among the largest incel forum - incels.is. Providing an inductive analysis of the race-related content collected directly from the forum, based in the principles of Charmanaz's Constructivist Grounded Theory, the study investigates the construction of incel identities, uncovering the nuances behind both individual and collective incel experiences. Concluding the findings of the analysis, the thesis contends that race is the central feature through and around which incel identity is constructed among non-white incels. Simultaneously, it argues that for different subgroups of incels, the central feature differs, largely depending on individual context and background. Furthermore, the thesis puts forward the concept of two hierarchies being present, the intergroup hierarchy, and the intragroup hierarchy, serving as complementary building blocks of incel identity construction and maintenance, offering novel conceptualisations for further research.