

SMITH, D.S. 2024. It made me feel powerful in a way: the role of suicidality in incel communities. Presented at the 8th Suicide and self-harm early and mid-career researchers' forum 2024, 17-18 June 2024, Glasgow, UK.

It made me feel powerful in a way: the role of suicidality in incel communities.

SMITH, D.S.

2024

The manosphere

What it is

- Anti-feminist/male hegemony online coalition
- Feminism has reduced rights of men - battle for masculinity (Smith, 2024)
- Red pill: unfair dating market; black pill: insurmountable dating market
- Distance from ideal = identities in manosphere (Ging, 2019)

Alpha masculinity

Pick Up Artists

Porn reboot
communities?

Manosphere

Men's Rights
Activists

Beta masculinity

Incels

Men Going
Their Own
Way

Crossover/migration between groups (Ribeiro, 2021)

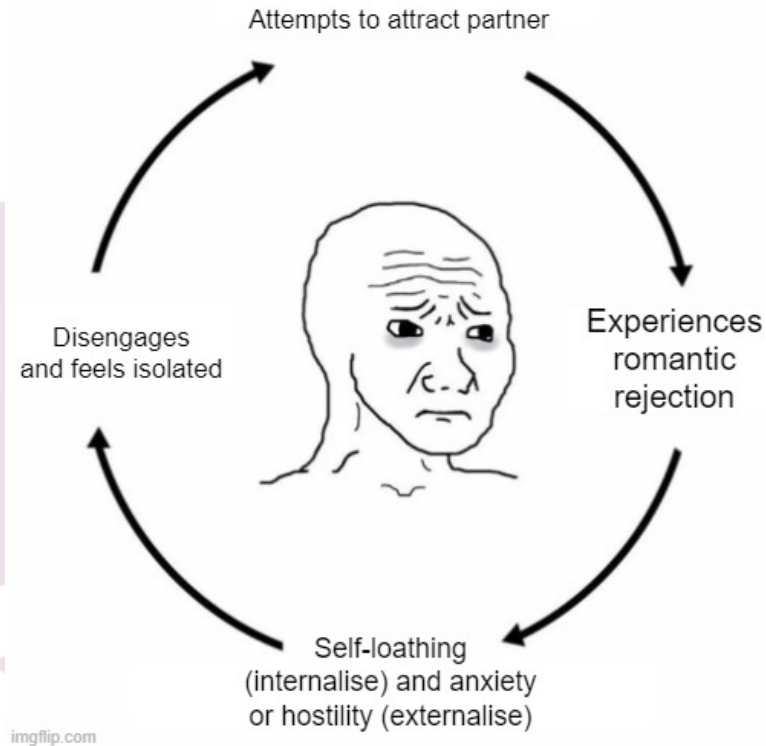
Incels

Inceldom

- 60-100k members (18-30)
- Diverse: 55% white (Blake & Brooks, 2023)
- Regional inequality: activity (Brooks et al., 2022)
- 50%: with parents/caregivers (Costello et al., 2022)
- Groups within groups (Decook & Kelly, 2021)
- Cycle: rejection - embitterment - alienation

Incels and mental health

- “Hope, cope, and rope” (Sparks, 2022)
- Body dysmorphia? fixation (Broyd et al., 2023)
- 75% depression, 45% anxiety (Costello et al., 2022)
- 20% daily self-harm ideation (Commission for Countering Extremism, 2024)
- Suicidality: 71.4% (incels.co survey, 2020); 66% (Daly & Laskovtsov, 2022): social capital?
- Suicide posts directly linked to philosophy (Daly & Laskovtsov, 2021)



**How do suicidality and self-harm bond incel communities?
Do these groups exacerbate members' feelings?**

Smith et al (in revision)

Participant	Age	Region	Incel from	Incel until	Dominant pill
1	23	United Kingdom	2016	2018	Black
2	21	Central Europe	2017	2020	Black
3	23	USA	2018	2020	Black then red
4	28	Eastern Europe	2016	2018	Red
5	29	Canada	2016	2019	Black then red
6	28	USA	2017	2021	Black
7	33	Canada	2010	2011	Black
8	25	Italy	2010	2021	Mixed
9	29	Brazil	2011	2018	Red
10	32	USA	2009	2011	Red
11	40	Canada	1996	2014	Red



Smith et al (in revision)

“Anger feels better than sadness”

Naturalising inferiority:
secret information

“It made me feel like
nothing is my fault - it's
just women doing this
to me”

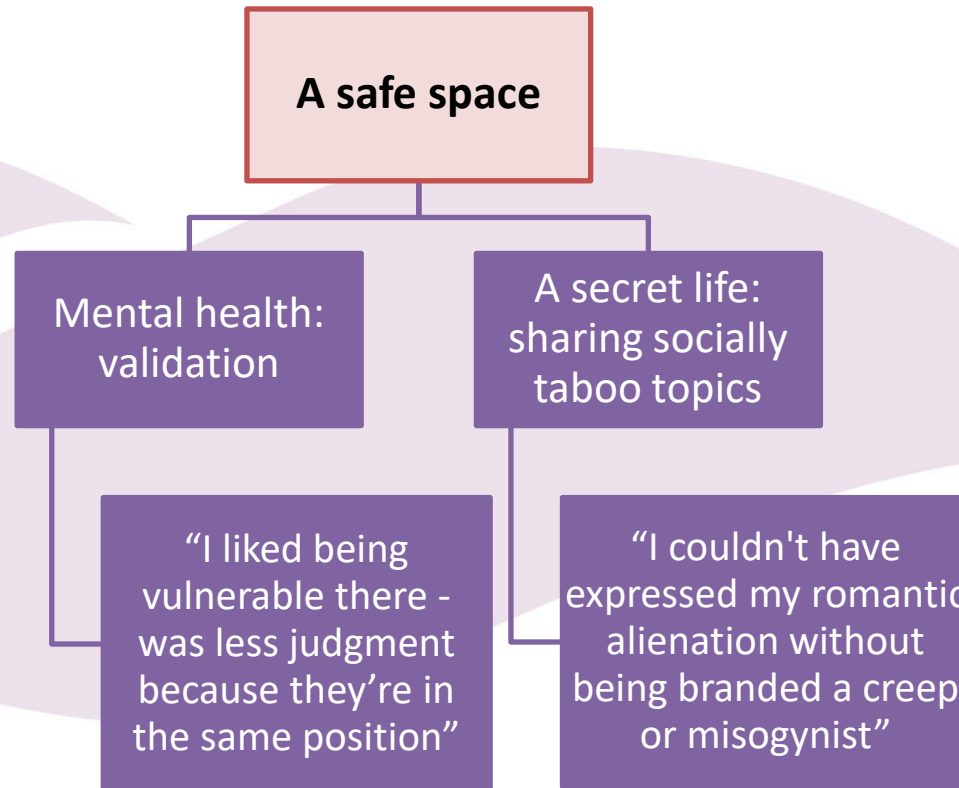
Failing with women = failing at life

Nihilism and sense of
failing at life: nothing
can change

Trying = “taking part in
my own humiliation”

“People come for the truth and stay for the lies. When I first joined, I was drawn to them because of my truth (no one had ever been attracted to me), but eventually, my truth became the truth (no one could be attracted to me)”

Smith et al (in revision)



“You could say “I wanna kill myself” and instead of being met with ‘oh no, please don't do it’ etc., someone would say ‘same’”

Smith et al (in revision)

The downward spiral

Race to the bottom:
transactional and
competitive

“The alpha is the guy
who spent the most
years a virgin”

New reasons to feel
insecure

Body dysmorphia:
“finding what you're
insecure about and
blowing it up”

Conclusions

- Short-term relief/long-term despair: validation without emotional support
- Normalises open discussions about sexuality and mental health
- Permanency of position becomes overwhelming with repeat visits
- Increased self-consciousness and nihilism
- Therapy: CBT (Maxwell et al., 2020), online/group (Broyd et al., 2022)

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The end

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