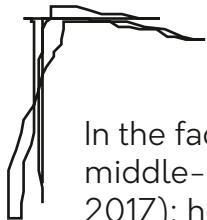# VIRULENT MASCULINITIES: NETWORKS OF (DE)INTOXICATION

In the face of the rise of reactionism and the far right – movements increasingly led by young middle-class men – we examine strategies and processes of radicalization (Sieckelinck et al., 2017): how are young people recruited, how are they dogmatizated, how is loyalty sustained, and how is dissent suppressed (Kimmel, 2018). We analyse digital strategies (Alfano et al., 2018) such as search-engine optimization (Covington et al., 2016), clickbait, Google bombing, and the exploitation of data voids; as well as linguistic strategies that ensure debates are not opportunities to pursue truth, but rather to appear strong and inflexible, following a logic of adversarial truth rooted in platforms like 4chan (Wong & Tierney, 2026).

We also consider the social catalysts of this wave – labour and housing precarity, and the atomization of social life, and why men appear particularly susceptible to this type of propaganda. The literature suggests that individuals undergoing radicalization are not primarily seeking a political agenda, but community and guidance (Stein, 2016). Propaganda is presented to them as the natural conclusion of certain feelings and emotions, rather than of beliefs and ideas. Moreover, the new conservatism is framed as an empowering lifestyle (Lewis, 2018), sustained through influencers' personal narratives (Leidig, 2026). Freed from the journalistic ethics of traditional media, these new citizen-journalists present themselves as more independent, more accessible, and more authentic, appealing to an audience that seeks encouragement rather than information (Phillips, 2018).

Examples from the Portuguese manosphere will be provided to illustrate this process. Methodologically, the study adopts a mixed approach that combines literature review with the construction and analysis of a corpus collected through Twitter's API, using keyword-based searches programmed in Python and implementing methodology from the digital humanities, alongside critical discourse analysis.

KEYWORDS: Masculinities, Social Media, Cultural Studies.
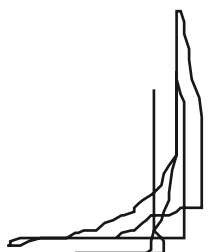
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Her doctoral research focuses on public discourse surrounding masculinities and its relationship with social media, particularly within the contemporary Portuguese context.

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