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The Misogynistic Machosphere: A Transdisciplinary Study of Antifeminist and Masculinist Discourses Online

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Séraphin ALAVA
Full Professor, PhD, Jean Jaurès University Toulouse, FRANCE
E-mail: seraphin.alava@gmail.com

María Ávila BRAVO-VILLASANTE
Associate Professor, PhD, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, SPAIN
E-mail: maria.avila@urjc.es

Abstract: The rise of anti-feminist discourse on the Internet, particularly in the machosphere, is an alarming fact. This sphere, enriched by the anonymity and accessibility of the Internet, has become a hotbed of violent masculinist discourse, legitimizing hatred and attacks against women. Sub-communities such as MRAs, MGTOWs, Incels and Pick-Up Artists promote an anti-feminist and traditionalist ideology of gender roles, often caricaturing and demonizing feminism. These discourses are widely disseminated on social media, where they gain visibility and enable the self-radicalization of their members. Researchers, activists and authorities fear that this online hatred could degenerate into physical violence. Our transdisciplinary study focuses on a corpus of masculinist and incel discourses in French and English from extreme right-wing sites. We adopt a dual approach: on the one hand, a semantic and sociological analysis to detect the rhetorical mechanisms

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and lexical codes that fuel this propaganda; on the other, a feminist methodology from a decolonial perspective to deconstruct these discourses, revealing the strategies of domination and power relations they convey. This study also explores the ideological convergences between different masculinist groups and how they use communication to legitimize extreme violence. We analyze the links between the current rise of online antifeminism and historical antifeminist discourses, highlighting the intersection between the emotional turn and the digital turn in these narratives.

Keywords: antifeminist discourse, masculinism, manosphere, online violence, epistemology of hate

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La machosphère misogyne : une étude transdisciplinaire des discours antiféministes et masculinistes en ligne

Résumé : La montée du discours antiféministe sur Internet, en particulier dans la machosphère, est un fait alarmant. Cette sphère, enrichie par l'anonymat et l'accessibilité d'Internet, est devenue un foyer de discours masculinistes violents, légitimant la haine et les attaques contre les femmes. Des sous-communautés telles que les MRA, les MGTOW, les Incels et les Pick-Up Artists promeuvent une idéologie anti-féministe et traditionaliste des rôles de genre, caricaturant et diabolisant souvent le féminisme. Ces discours sont largement diffusés sur les médias sociaux, où ils gagnent en visibilité et permettent l'auto-radicalisation de leurs membres. Les chercheurs, les militants et les autorités craignent que cette haine en ligne ne dégénère en violence physique. Notre étude transdisciplinaire porte sur un corpus de discours masculinistes et incel en français et en anglais provenant de sites d'extrême droite. Nous adoptons une double approche : d'une part, une analyse sémantique et sociologique pour détecter les mécanismes rhétoriques et les codes lexicaux qui alimentent cette propagande ; d'autre part, une méthodologie féministe dans une perspective décoloniale pour déconstruire ces discours, révélant les stratégies de domination et les relations de pouvoir qu'ils véhiculent. Cette étude explore également les convergences idéologiques entre différents groupes masculinistes et la manière dont ils utilisent la communication pour légitimer la violence extrême. Nous analysons les liens entre la montée actuelle de l'antiféminisme en ligne et les discours antiféministes historiques, en soulignant l'intersection entre le tournant émotionnel et le tournant numérique dans ces récits.

Mots-clés : discours antiféministe, masculinisme, Mmnosphère, violence en ligne, épistémologie de la haine.

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Introduction

Our analysis is based on a corpus of masculinist and incel discourses, in French and English, disseminated on sites affiliated with the extreme right. While we are dealing with a phenomenon that transcends borders, the radicalization of these groups can

vary according to the individuals' political and social ecosystem. By exploring the diversity of these sources, we seek to understand the communicative dynamics that fuel these discourses, and to identify ideological convergences between different groups. Finally, we contextualize these discourses within the broader framework of the evolution of antifeminist movements, highlighting the intersection between the emotional turn and the digital turn in these narratives.

Digital societies have encouraged the proliferation of digital communities. While these spaces are of great use to various social and political movements in the struggle to build fairer societies - notably feminism, environmentalism, LGBTIQ+ rights, the civil rights movement, etc. - they are also used by reactionary movements. - they are also used by reactionary movements. In this sense, since 2014, phenomena such as *Gamergate* - a cyberbullying campaign against the attempt to introduce diversity into the video game industry and content - or *Fappening* - the leaking of intimate images of celebrities - have highlighted the proliferation of antifeminist and misogynist discourses in digital communities (Massanari, 2017).

Our analysis is based on a corpus of masculinist and incel discourses, in French and English by French personalities or influencers, disseminated on sites affiliated with the far right. By exploring the diversity of these sources, we seek to understand the communicative dynamics that fuel these discourses and identify ideological convergences between different groups. Finally, we contextualize these discourses within the broader framework of the evolution of antifeminist movements, highlighting the intersection between the emotional turn and the digital turn in these narratives. (Our analysis is based on a corpus of masculinist and incel discourses, in French and English by French personalities or influencers, disseminated on sites affiliated with the far right. By exploring the diversity of these sources, we seek to understand the communicative dynamics that fuel these discourses and identify ideological convergences between different groups. Many analyses have been carried out in the Anglo-Saxon context. In the French context, little research exists (Andriamandroso, R, 2022) (Gourarier, M., 2014) (Lefort, É., 2018).

These online manifestations of hatred are nurtured and fueled by the misogynist and anti-feminist discourses that inhabit the machosphere[1] . The machosphere is a type of digital community composed mainly of white heterosexual men whose common interests and narratives revolve around the rejection of gender equality policies (Ávila, 2023). Interestingly, this is not a homogeneous, monolithic block of positions. Indeed, the appearance in 2021 of a group calling itself *The Black Manosphere (*2023) invites us to rethink the internal rearticulation of these groups and legitimizes the hypothesis that the backbone of all these movements is antifeminism.

The machosphere has been discovered as a recurring, violent and structured phenomenon. Its analysis brings us face to face with four major heterogeneous groups

[1] Following the recommendations of the Real Academia Espagnola (2019, August 6), we translate the term manosphere in this context as machosphere.

that share a certain family atmosphere. Following the metaphor of the *red pill,* they set themselves the goal of liberating men from feminist deception (Cousineau, 2021; Ging, 2019b). *Red pillars* see feminism as a sexual strategy used by women to adopt a privileged status and select men with better DNA (Valkenburgh, 2021). These claims make sense when you consider that their strategy is an amalgam of half-truths and out-of-context theories from evolutionary psychology. They also resort to outdated biological theories in an attempt to verify their theories on sexual differences. To complete the strong core of their ideology, they resort to misogynist narratives, neoliberal discourses and, appropriating the concept of gender ideology implemented by neo-machism (Corredor, 2019), they consider feminism to be an ideology. They therefore set themselves the task of devising a strategy capable of refuting that elaborated by women. In a context where gender ideology is omnipresent, this construction must involve experimentation and empirical data gathered in the field (Valkenburgh, 2021). While we cannot focus on this aspect, we note that it is a strategy that resonates strongly with affective audiences.

The violent masculine discourses of these groups are often racist, anti-feminist, misogynist, homophobic and colonialist. Antifeminism and misogyny are not new phenomena; they have a long history. What is new is the way these discourses are propagated online, and the invitation to violence - symbolic and real - that these narratives convey. What's new is the use of new technologies, the digitization of reactionary narratives and the widespread impact they can have on affective audiences. These types of narratives are supported by the discursive device of post-truth (Núñez and Fernández, 2019). This strategy is evident when analyzing far-right discourses on gender-based violence. The discourse cannot be backed up by facts, let alone statistics. Despite the data, analyses of the digitization of public conversation indicate that affective citizens place more importance on emotional content than rational content (Arias, 2016).

The Internet, with its anonymity and ease of access, has not only enabled these discourses to spread more freely, but has also provided fertile ground for the self-radicalization of its members. Social media, in particular, have played a key role in the amplification of these ideologies, making hate speech and misogyny more visible and accessible. Far from being anecdotal, the very configuration of digital platforms favors, through their positioning policies, extremism, gender trolling[2] , polarization and the proliferation of hate speech (Zerilli, 2021, March 12; Helbing et al., 2017, February 25; Avila 2024).

[2] Systematic hordes attack the digital activities of feminists or women expressing political opinions

1. MACHOSPHERE and its sub-communities

1.1. *Spheres, Galaxies, Clouds? What Are We Talking About?*

When we talk about masculinism today, we're referring to universes (online and offline) that are spaces where diverse meanings and ideologies are structured, disseminated and coordinated. Masculinism and antifeminism have often been seen as twin movements, enemies of feminism, feminists and women. Ironwood (2013), in his book *The Manosphere: A New Hope for Masculinity*, vigorously defends the machosphere, claiming that everything written about it has been elaborated by its opponents. Based on this elaboration, the machosphere is described as a movement of conservative, embittered gentlemen who nostalgically remember the happy 1950s. Ironwood's mixed-up version of the machosphere is a meeting place for men who want to express their opinions without being accused of being sexist, macho or anti-feminist. What Ironwood refuses to acknowledge is that this is not an accusation, but a description: their opinions are sexist, macho and anti-feminist.

Laura Bates' (2023) analysis corroborates the fact that the macho-sphere is not anodyne. She invites us to think of a vast network of websites, forums, chats, groups and social networking accounts maintaining close, symbiotic relations with other virtual supremacist communities. The machosphere is a network of websites, videos, digital social network profiles and commentaries that advocate a return to a patriarchal political regime, virile male performance and heterosexual, functionalist social relations between men and women (Morin, 2021). In the American and even Anglo-Saxon context, four main groups can be described: Men's Rights Activists (MRAs), Men Who Go Their Own Way (MGTOWs), Masters of Seduction (PUAs) and Involuntary Singles or Incels. MRAs (Men's Rights Activists) emerged at the beginning of the last century. They claim that laws discriminate against them, which led them to form groups to defend their rights. The MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way) are said to be a radicalization of the MRA. They consider that laws and social norms discriminate against men. Faced with a deeply misandric society, they invite men to follow their own path: neither the state nor women can dictate the course of their lives (Chapin, 2016).

Pick Up Artists (PUAs) are communities where tips and techniques of what they call "scientific seduction" are exchanged (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). In these forums and spaces, sexual violence against women is openly promoted. "Scientific seduction" techniques use fear, abuse of power, displays of force and harassment of women. The group focuses on learning and practicing techniques for seducing women, often with controversial rhetoric about gender dynamics.

Finally, we're talking about incels (involuntary celibates). This is a community of heterosexual men who have difficulty finding a romantic and sexual partner. They channel their frustration against women, developing misogynistic and violent attitudes. Bratich and Benet-Weiser's analysis shows that a proportion of incels are frustrated masters of seduction (Bratich & Banet-Weiser, 2019). They are the most radical of all the groups analyzed, insofar as they celebrate violence beyond the net.

Since their first killings, they have been analyzed for their similarities to terrorism (Illa, 2021). In 2021, the European Commission's Radicalisation Awareness Network published a report on the incel phenomenon, warning of the extreme violence of these ecosystems (RAN, 2021).

In the French-speaking context, we find the following groups: Hominístes, Néo-masculin, MGTOW-France, ManKind Project (MKP) France.

ARM (Hoministe): Hominisme, a French-language current that asserts that it is men, not women, who are oppressed today and suffer significant structural discrimination in society.

Néo-Masculin: Néo-Masculin is a major French-language site in the neo-masculine community, distinguished from other masculinist forums by its unique positioning. The site shares certain ideas with the MGTOW movement, which advocates voluntary celibacy and a life without women.

MGTOW France: Mgtow-france represents a movement in which men have decided to withdraw from a society dominated by women. Mgtow-france members argue that relationships with women are too costly and risky, and that men would do better to concentrate on their own well-being.

The machosphere is far from describing an organized, coordinated universe; it's a virtual space of communication, exchange, propaganda and alternative information circulating between media planets whose subjects vary. If we follow Ironwood's account, millions of men would approach the machosphere daily in search of a guide, an explanation, a sense of what it means to be a man in a culture altered by feminism. To this question would be added the search for male empowerment, to regain the confidence that the advance of women seems to have taken away from them. Alongside a reflection on men's actions and lifestyles, we find a stance in favor of men's rights and a more or less violent critique of feminism and women's freedom. Finally, we find an apology for the hierarchical male-female relationship, and the denunciation of male genocide by what they consider "feminazis". We are faced with a complex thematic framework that converges and intersects with other digital spaces that populate the network. It is therefore essential to analyze the interactions, magnetizations and borrowings that take place between the machosphere and other virtual communities such as the fachosphere, the jihadosphere and the complosphere.

1.2. *What are the Semantic and Social Interpretations of Masculinist Universes?*

Millions of men turn to the machosphere every day for answers to the question of what it means to be a man. What does it mean to be a man? What is masculinity? In the history of thought, great resources have been devoted to the question of what femininity is. Masculinity, on the other hand, has not been the subject of in-depth reflection; it has been taken for granted and has not aroused the interest of intellectuals and philosophers. It was only at the end of the twentieth century that the question of masculinity was formulated, in reaction to feminism. It was only after the changes of the 1970s that masculinity began to be questioned (Faludi, 1993, Ávila 2019,

Vendrell, 2020). As an entelechy, the only thing we can note is the impossibility of apprehending it satisfactorily. However, we can see a common thread running through all the approaches: although we can't know exactly what masculinity is, it seems clear that feminism is placing it on the brink of extinction. From this perspective, masculinity appears as something fragile, extremely vulnerable in the face of an atrocious system that wants to destroy it with its imperatives of egalitarianism. We don't know what masculinity is, but as an entelechy, it seems to oppose equality.

We could define masculinism as a movement that "defends the masculine as an identity reference for men" (Lorente, 2017, February 3). Given that men's identity reference has been machismo, they defend it: "it defends machismo, which is what defines and has historically defined men's identity under the reference of the patriarchal culture they have created, so that 'the masculine' is the universal model for the whole of society and 'the feminine' is reduced to the domestic sphere and subordinated to that of men" (Lorente, 2017, February 3). The term was born with a vocation for deception. Masculinism is a neologism created by analogy with the term feminism, as if feminism referred to women. It's a common re-signification that attempts to transfer feminist struggles for equality to a war of women against men. By this simple semantic operation, they manage, on the one hand, to distort the fundamental objective of feminism and, on the other, to present it as a potential enemy for half the population.

The emergence and dynamics of masculinist universes in contemporary discourse can be analyzed along several semantic and social axes, and not just as a function of social and political context. Indeed, while masculinism emerges in opposition to feminism, certain forms of questioning masculinity can deploy cohabitationist visions by demanding rights for men, aspiring to reclaim men's intimate masculinity and highlighting the difficulties of living as men in a society that is, from their point of view, unbalanced. In this perspective, terms such as "masculinities", "hominists" and "new masculinities" indicate a personal or collective quest to overcome a perceived social crisis. But all too often, the quest for this evolution towards human rights is based on an ideologization of relations between women and men, and a questioning of feminist movements and achievements.

1.3. *Anti-feminism*

We must deny originality to the antifeminism inherent in the narratives of the macho sphere. If the articulation of feminist thought takes us back to the Enlightenment, it is precisely in its shadows, in the veins it failed to illuminate, that we find the emergence of antifeminism. Reactions against feminism cannot be studied in a vacuum; we need to be attentive to the concrete context in which they occur, and to the way in which oppressive relations are legitimized politically, ideologically and historically. Although this contextualization goes beyond the intentions of the article, it is pertinent to point out that the antifeminism of the macho sphere is a radicalized version of that which emerged at the end of the twentieth century. The countless advances of the 1970s prompted an unprecedented reaction in the 1980s (Faludi, 1993,

Ávila, 2019). These advances, although still insufficient to achieve true equality, were perceived in absolute terms.

According to this reading, feminism no longer makes sense. Post-feminism enters the public arena in its cultural version. It revolves around the idea that, since equality is already a fact, feminism is unnecessary. From then on, any reference to feminism is outdated, a kind of anachronism with a negative emotional charge. Feminism becomes a dirty word (Bolotín, October 17, 1982). In her analysis of the anti-feminist backlash in the USA in the 1980s, Susan Faludi meticulously dissects the strategies orchestrated to hinder feminist progress and their insidious impact on public opinion. A striking example is the attribution of increased rape rates to increased freedom for women, a fallacious narrative propagated by the authorities. By portraying the struggles that led to women's liberation as the cause of escalating sexual violence, this strategy effectively redefines the achievements of feminism, scapegoating it for a range of societal ills - from the high number of homeless women to rising violence, low birth rates, school dropouts and teenage suicide. Judges and police have blamed feminism for the increase in the number of women offenders (Faludi, 1993).

In an attempt to reverse the gains of feminism, they insistently appeal to biology. Here again, they are not original: the appeal to the inequality and complementarity of the sexes legitimized sexual inequality until the 19th century. If feminism's job has been to erode these theories, anti-feminist discourse will make a titanic effort to rescue them. Whatever the scientific community's evidence for the non-existence of girl brains and boy brains (Rippon, 2019; Joel et al. 2015), antifeminist ideology adopts, with great success, the pseudo-scientific line inaugurated by Gray in his famous *Men are from Mars and women are from Venus* (Gray, 2013).

It is legitimate and relevant to ask why they are revived with such violence. To do so, it is important to consider the motivations behind these reactions. In addition to social and identity-related aspects, they are also driven by economic considerations. To underestimate the role of economics in all these movements is to overlook a fundamental part of the problem. One of the constitutive elements of traditional male identity in Western societies is the role of breadwinner. Although we don't know exactly what masculinity consists of, George Gilder, author of *Sexual Suicide*, reminds us that "a real man pays his family's bills, all the bills" (Faludi, 1993:420). So it's not surprising that in times of economic recession, anti-feminism is revived. In Western countries, the economic crisis of the late twentieth century led to the marginalization of many middle-class men, who lost the ability to provide for their families. In the same geography, women's struggle for wage, economic and professional equality was perceived as a serious threat, in which economic, identity and social aspects were combined. In the first decades of the twentieth century, in the context of the "gig economy" (Kessler, 2019) or the uberization of the economy (Fleming, 2017), some voices, unable to account for the structural complexity that leads to the casualization of life, point to feminism as the culprit. Once again, feminism is to blame for everything. From then on, the simplistic solution proposed by these groups is a return to traditional masculinity and, by extension, insofar as

femininity and masculinity are complementary entelechies, to restore traditional femininity.

This victimization, inaugurated by Warren Farrel in the 1980s, lies at the heart of abject masculinity (King, 2009). In the work of Tania Modleski, we find a suggestive frame of reference for understanding abject masculinities. According to Modleski, masculine power is consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution, so his response to the threat of women's power is to incorporate it (Modleski, 1991). Consequently, moments of crisis for masculinity would be part of a process of introjection at the end of which hegemonic masculinity would emerge strengthened. What remains to be elucidated is what masculinity in crisis incorporates to respond to the threat. One of the hypotheses that best resolves this question is that of Claire Sisco King (2009). According to her, faced with the inability of many men to conform to hegemonic masculinity, they incorporate traits of weakness (in the case of the victimization strategy) or sexual ineptitude (in the case of incels) and transform them into an extension of masculine power. Traits a priori distant from - or even contrary to - hegemonic masculinity end up becoming one of its many manifestations.

According to Kelly & Aunspach (2020), this transgression of masculine norms has the effect of extending male power, building a diffuse, heterogeneous masculinity whose contours and boundaries are unclear. In a reactionary context that presents the struggle for equality as a war of the sexes, the new abject masculinity can be read as a call to arms, contributing to the radicalization of younger generations. This is the reading made by a good part of the incel community (Kelly & Aunspach, 2020).

2. A Methodological Approach to Masculinist Ideologies

2.1. *Epistemology of Feminist Research on Digital Discourses*

Our research applies to the study of masculinist digital discourses, taking into account both the epistemologies specific to digital studies and feminist epistemology applied to the analysis of digital discourses. Indeed, feminist perspectives transform traditional methodologies and foster a deeper understanding of power issues in the digital (Bravo-Villasante, 2023). Indeed, feminist epistemologies, such as those developed by Harding (1987) and Harding and Hintikka (1983), challenge traditional methodological approaches that often obscure women's experiences and reproduce sexist and androcentric prejudices. They propose methods that value women's voices and experiences, offering a necessary critique of established epistemological norms. In our work, we posit the principle of triangulation (Hesse-Biber, 2012) to uncover knowledge often overlooked by conventional approaches. We are therefore sensitive to the need for critical reflection on data collection and analysis, in order to avoid reproducing a gendered reading and take into account the intersectional dynamics at play. In our approach, we examine how the digital is transforming methods in the humanities and social sciences (Bourdeloie, 2013) by attempting to integrate a feminist perspective to address gender biases in digital research, enabling existing

methodologies to be questioned and redefined. Taking into account the situated character of all knowledge (Haraway, 1988). We deploy a methodology centered on qualitative analysis (Millette et al., 2020) to understand the nuances of human interactions across digital media, which is crucial to addressing issues of gender and identity in a contextual and nuanced way.

2.2. *Between Opinion and Ideology, what is the Place of Discourse on the Net?*

In a factual, citizen-centric approach, political or simply social discourse on the web is a means of expressing thought, opinions and power relations formulated in a digital social space. From a Saussurian point of view (Saussure, 1918), masculinist discourse is above all a set of linguistic signs, each of which refers to a specific meaning. The function of these discourses is to communicate specific ideas, beliefs, values and perspectives about men, women, gender relations and society. At the heart of these words and this set of arguments is therefore the explicit desire of one or more speakers to question or criticize certain aspects of contemporary feminism, to promote traditional values of masculinity or to discuss male-female dynamics in a particular way. From this point of view, masculinist discourse generally aims to influence the thinking and attitudes of listeners or readers with regard to gender issues. But we need to go further and understand, in Derrida's terms (Derrida, 1967), that masculinist discourse needs to be deconstructed, and that it would be dangerous not to see the tensions, contradictions and ambiguities that run through this discursive coherence. In this sense, masculinist discourse attempts to make sense of complex notions such as masculinity, femininity and gender relations in a historical and communicative moment when another (feminist) discourse speaks and expresses the same notions.

From this point of view, masculinist discourse can be seen as a defensive reaction aimed at maintaining the gender hierarchy, giving priority to the male perspective. This hierarchy is challenged and deconstructed by feminist approaches. Derrida introduces the concept of "différance", which suggests that meaning is based on difference and repetition. Masculinist discourse can be understood as an attempt to define masculinity as distinct from femininity, while repeating certain ideas and stereotypes about the roles of men and women. The question we do not address in this article, in this confrontation between two discourses (masculinist/feminist), is which discourse occupies the center and which the margins. In any case, in Chomsky's sense (Chomsky & Herman, 1988), masculinist discourse uses linguistic structures to articulate ideas about masculinity, femininity and gender relations. It creates linguistic patterns that reflect and reinforce the beliefs and norms associated with these concepts. This linguistic innovation or reaction is very rich (man, masculinist, involuntary bachelor, feminazi, etc.) and thus aims to install through words the obvious or at least the "unprovable" which, by diffusion, produces the facts of another reality. From this Chomskyan perspective, masculinist discourse can be seen as a tool of persuasion and influence. It aims to convince, legitimize and establish certain perspectives on masculinity, and to influence attitudes towards gender issues. Chomsky introduced the concept of "manufactured consent", which refers to the way in which influential elites shape the media agenda to serve their interests. In this sense,

masculinist discourse is an attempt to control the agenda by emphasizing certain issues and downplaying others, often to the detriment of women and feminist movements. These words help to reinforce, create and dominate gender norms, such as traditional masculinity, and can help to maintain unequal power structures (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). This semantic reaction finds its strength in communicative interactions that, word by word, construct a reality. Thus, masculinist discourse helps shape perceptions of masculinity and femininity through linguistic and social interactions. Discourse is thus a weapon of combat in the Bourdieusian sense of the term (Bourdieu, 1998), as it contributes, through language and communicative effects, to the reproduction of male domination by maintaining traditional gender norms opportunely modernized, biologized and victimized.

2.2. *Methodology for Analyzing Masculinist Discourse*

In order to build a methodology for collecting, selecting and analyzing the discourses present in masculinist spheres, we have constructed an exploration framework based on netnography (Branthonne and Waldispuehl, 2019) from specific points in different phases. In the first phase, we will use an ethnographic fieldwork approach in the network that will enable us to observe the interactions and practices of these groups without constructing a device for the co-construction of meaning. This method is based on content analysis and online non-participant observation, incorporating qualitative data analysis techniques (Nvivo, Tal) for immersive research. We use these methods to understand the social, cultural and behavioral dynamics that manifest themselves on digital platforms (Paveau, 2013).

This method aims to guarantee several principles:

- Reflexivity and critical distance: our approach emphasizes the importance of reflexivity, i.e. the awareness and critical analysis of one's own biases, perspectives and social positions in research. We try to take a critical distance from epistemic norms that claim universality and objectivity, recognizing that these norms often reflect specific, generally dominant and masculine perspectives.

- Holistic understanding: as proposed by the structural method (Levi Strauss, 1958), it is important to understand masculinist discourses in the broader context of their "culture". This means analyzing the myths, symbols and linguistic structures on which these communities are based. Immersion in masculinist culture and in the words that nourish its discourses is essential.

- Anglophone and francophone analysis: Our research focuses on identifying structures of meaning that we have termed "semantic lines", and we have chosen to take into account posts, speeches and exchanges on Anglophone and francophone forums on subjects identified as European. Masculinist discourse can be found on Canadian, American and French sites alike.

- Data selection method: To build up our corpus, we took 4 samples over a period of one year from public sites or open forums corresponding to 4 categories (alter information sites, blogs by masculinist personalities, exchanges in media

interaction spaces, selection of masculinist videos, etc.) We chose to anonymize all sentences or interactions collected.

- Length of immersion and amount of reference data: Extended immersion is essential to fully understand the nuances and subtleties of the community. We therefore monitored the 9 sites mentioned above from June 1, 2021 to June 1, 2022. Our database initially contained 982 sentences, which we reduced to 640 after grouping or deleting identical elements.

- Technodiscursive approach: Following Paveau's epistemological perspective, we explore online discourse through the prism of what she calls "technodiscursivity", seeking to describe the complex interactions between text, digital context and users.

3. Masculinist Discourse in the Digital Space

Our aim, in analyzing data from 640 phrases collected over a year on masculinist sites, was first to identify the most frequently used words in the database. Unsurprisingly, these were "woman*" 289 times, "man*" 198 times, "feminism*" 81 times.

Content analysis of our corpus revealed four predominant thematic components reflecting masculinist perspectives, which we have schematized in the figure below.

The first component, "Sexual preferences and attractions", occupies 34.78% of the discourse. It highlights a fixation on youth and feminine beauty, as well as a valuing of masculinity in terms of status and power. This theme highlights stereotypes of attractiveness, where men are perceived as aging "like wine" and women "like milk", marking a clear disparity in the perception of age and desirability between the sexes.

The second component, also with 34.78%, refers to "power dynamics and relations between men and women". This part of the discourse reveals a tendency to valorize male domination and female submission, highlighting traditional gender roles. Men are described as attractive when they embody dominant character traits, while women are often presented as preferring powerful, experienced partners.

The third component, "Social and ideological critique", accounts for 8.70% of content. It focuses on questioning feminism and contemporary social movements as a threat to the established social order and to the detriment of men. This discourse suggests a defense of traditional power structures and a critique of the ideologies that seek to destabilize them.

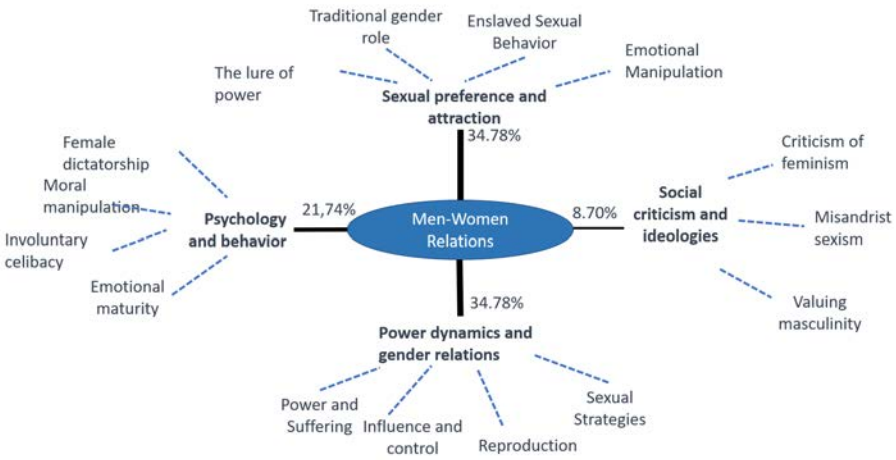


Figure 1: *Overview of masculinist forum topics*

Finally, the fourth section, "Psychology and behavior", accounts for 21.74% of citations. It explores behavioral and psychological differences between the sexes, often from a point of view that highlights negative attributes associated with women, such as cunning or manipulation, and men's tendency towards leadership and strategy.

Table 1. Characteristic phrases of the themes

Sexual preferences and attractions	A woman's face ages 2 to 3 times faster than a man's: men age like wine, women like milk. Men are most desirable at 50, while women's desirability peaks at 18 and then drops off rapidly.
Power dynamics and gender relations	Instead of preferring empathetic, responsible men, women are more attracted to narcissistic, manipulative, psychopathic men. Women's preference for psychopathic men may be linked to rape fantasies. The more psychopathic a man's attitude, the more attractive he is to women.
Psychology and behavior	Despite claims to the contrary, women care less about a man's ethical standards than his genes and achievements. Men are supposed to lead women, but women are naturally more perceptive than men.

Social perceptions and gender roles	Women love children just as men love women. For a man to succeed in his sexual strategy, the woman must suffer. For a woman to carry out her sexual strategy, the man must suffer.

3.1. *Talking about Men*

The first thing that emerges from a critical analysis of the selected speeches is that they are not presented as "alpha males" or self-assured men in the space. They don't see themselves as dominant or playing a protective role towards women. Discourses suggest that men tend to be attracted to young women, valuing in particular traits associated with youth. This predilection is illustrated by remarks about the desirability of teenage faces and the reproductive success of deep-voiced men. "*Men find teenage girls' faces more attractive .... Deep-voiced men have more children and sexual partners" (French, Blabla 18-25 forum)*.

The question of age and desirability is an important one, as they consider that men age better than women and retain their attractiveness well into old age. On the other hand, they argue that women's desirability declines with age. *"Men age like wine, women like milk. Video France - Pick-Up Artist"*. Addressing these issues allows them to introduce the question of men's polygamous needs and girls' expectations in terms of age and attractiveness.

Another interesting aspect is the examination and criticism of men who earn less than their female partners - *"no woman prefers a weak man Speech USA - MGTOW"*. These remarks reflect society's expectations of masculinity and financial success, with an impact on the breadwinner role traditionally associated with men.

In line with many PUA messages, many of these speeches convey an image of masochistic, indecisive young women, waiting for men to decide for them. *"The more beautiful a woman is, the more men will let her bullshit slide and even accept anything. Women need masculinity in their lives; Speech USA - PUA"*. This idea easily fits into the discourses that promote "rape culture". More specifically, they assert that women would be strongly attracted to men who behave like psychopaths because of their rape fantasies. These opinions reveal deeply rooted perceptions of sexism, violence and predation in relationships between men and women. *"Women's preferences for psychopathic men could be linked to rape fantasies. Forum francophone MGTOW "*

In our analysis, we often find that there are consistent comparisons between men and women. In some statements, men are clearly at a disadvantage in the comparison. For example, it is said that men are more superficial than women, or that they prefer pretty women to ensure their paternity, highlighting perceived inequalities in men's and women's roles and behaviors. Men need to be powerful and dominant to be loved, reflecting a traditional and rigid view of gender roles. This perspective contrasts with

the idea that women and children are loved simply because they exist. It is argued that men use indifference to control interactions, while women use emotion. It is also suggested that, to be effective leaders, men must use cunning and strength. Finally, the text constantly criticizes feminism and its effects, claiming that men are humiliated by feminists and risk being accused of sexual harassment if they try to dominate a woman. These criticisms reflect a persistent conflict between men and feminist ideas.

3.2. *Discourses on Women*

Unsurprisingly, the discourse on women is very negative and violent. *"We are programmed to help women and respect men, not the other way around. - forum Egalité et réconciliation france*". First and foremost, it attacks women's relational and sexual choices, portraying them as masochistic beings who seek out narcissistic, manipulative and dominant men. The texts assert that women are manipulative and self-interested, and seek only to dominate men. *"Women will do anything to win. They will change sides, lie, betray...". Groupe Commentaires Hoministe France"*.

They use their sexuality - through cunning, seduction and deception - to gain material or emotional advantages. "*Women turn their sex into a weapon, as it is their main asset and very often their only card - Forum Incels MGTOW Usa).* In short, they are Machiavellian in their interactions, their loyalty described as opportunistic, conditioned by their dependence on male power. Their loyalty is not based on genuine affection or respect.

In this context, feminism is often associated with mental disorders and an unhealthy aversion to men. "*Feminism is a psychologically regressive, infantile, narcissistic and manipulative ideology - Influenceuse France".* Feminists are often portrayed as suffering from psychological and relationship problems, underlining the negative vision of the movement. The discourse asserts women's inferiority, portraying them as immature, less logical and less responsible than men. It is suggested that women do not mature as much as men, and that they remain emotionally adolescent. As far as gender roles are concerned, the focus is on traditional female roles, with an emphasis on submission. In keeping with classic misogyny, women's emotional instability is emphasized, portraying them as incapable of making rational decisions.

Finally, the database highlights the critique of women's hypergamy. In line with what has been discussed so far, women's goal in relationships is to seek status through relationships with men of higher social status. *"The search for a man of great value is the objective of women, even if they are never sure of making the best possible deal - France site Reconquête".* At the same time, they are criticized for being less interested in sexuality and more oriented towards commitment and security in relationships.

3.3. *Discourses on Feminism*

The impact of feminism on women's mental health is at the heart of these critiques. In line with romantic misogyny and earlier anti-feminist discourses, they claim that feminism makes women unhappy and hysterical. Feminists are portrayed as suffering

from psychological and relational disorders. *"The more dominant, even totalitarian, feminism becomes, the more unhappy these women become, and the more deafening their tears and cries. Never has the feminist had so many hysterical fits, never has she wailed so much and displayed so many psychological disorders. France Internet Comments"*

Neo-feminism is described as a form of totalitarianism, claiming to speak for all women while imposing a single, dominant vision of femininity and gender roles. Particular attention is paid to feminists' obsession with gender-related issues such as genitalia and sexuality, often to the detriment of other women's issues deemed more important. Feminism is also accused of rejecting and denigrating masculinity, promoting a negative view of men and their role in society. *"When you dissect the productions of militant feminism, especially artistic ones, you realize how the subjects of inspiration are just as limited and always based on sexual organs, trash and easy provocations - Forum PUA Francophone".*

The document states that feminism leads to frustration and unhappiness for women, by distancing them from traditional roles and encouraging them to adopt behaviors contrary to their nature. Finally, feminism is seen as exacerbating conflict between the sexes, rather than promoting equality and mutual understanding. In short, the document takes a very hostile stance towards feminism and neo-feminism, describing them as dangerous and counter-productive movements that harm women and exacerbate conflict and violence between the sexes.

4. Focus on Feminism

To better analyze the relationship between masculinism and antifeminism, we created a sub-base of sentences in which variants of the word "feminis*" appear. We then constructed a spatial representation of the most characteristic themes (Figure 2).

The mind map we've constructed presents the anti-feminist dynamic that emerged from the sentences we collected. The map is organized around three central nuclei: "Man", "Woman" and "Feminism". Note that these words actually reflect a single axis, that of criticism of feminism. No supremacist or prideful discourse, no apology for the alpha male, but an attack on all forms of feminism. From these nuclei, we find a first circle that presents forms of feminism: "radical feminism", "intersectional feminism", "patriarchy", "feminazi", "ecofeminist", "racist feminist", "brainless feminism", "toxic feminism", "Muslim feminism". From these poles of attraction, a violent critique is organized around terms and ideas that reflect negative perspectives on feminism and its perceived effects on society, men, women and family structure. These are the various forms of antifeminism:

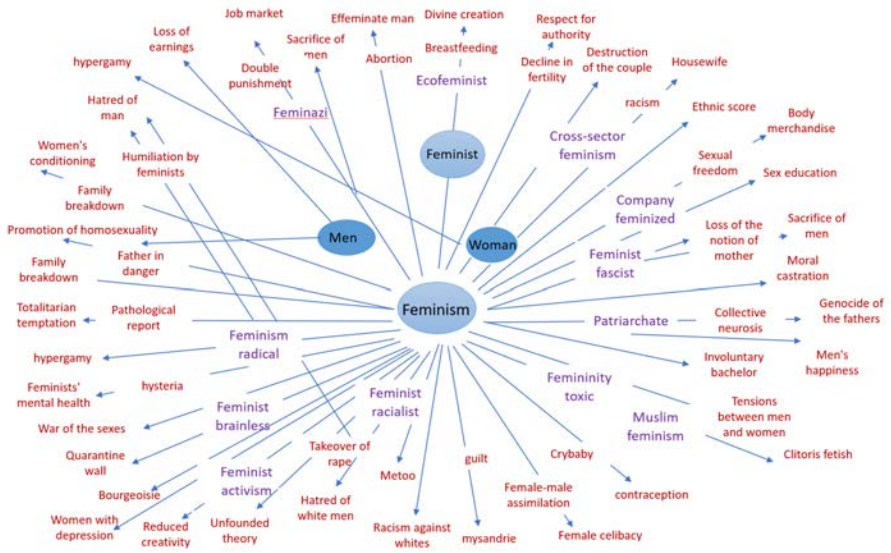


Figure 2: *Mind map of masculinist keywords in masculinist forums*

Among the terms and branches that can be observed are "radical feminism", "intersectional feminism", "patriarchy", "effeminate male", "housewife", and other terms such as "ecofeminist", "racist feminist", "gender war", "female celibacy", "metro", "white male hatred", "cult", "Muslim feminism" and "clitoris fetishism". There are also references to concepts such as "family breakdown", "hypergamy", "totalitarian temptation" and "parental genocide".

The map presents a highly critical perspective on feminism, focusing on controversial aspects or criticisms often raised in certain antifeminist or masculinist discourses.

Conclusion

The article highlights the worrying phenomenon of anti-feminist sentiment gaining ground in the digital landscape. While antifeminist views have always existed, this analysis highlights the unprecedented nature of their dissemination on online platforms. The research corroborates the rise of online misogyny, particularly prevalent in online communities known as the "manosphere". This virtual environment fosters the spread of antifeminist ideology through emotionally-charged rhetoric that cultivates animosity towards feminists and, by extension, women in general.

The analysis also reveals a transnational dimension to this phenomenon. The study demonstrates a thematic continuity between the antifeminist narratives conveyed by the French manosphere and those originating in the United States (figure 1). Both iterations seem to advocate a regressive return to simplistic, outdated conceptions of masculinity and femininity. This is evidenced by the emphasis on reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes (e.g. female manipulation, women's emphasis on physical appearance, women's disinterest in sexuality) and re-establishing hierarchical gender roles (e.g. male dominance, female submission). In particular, the analysis identifies feminism as a common scapegoat for the perceived disruption of these established norms.

Interestingly, Figure 2 suggests a potential divergence within the French manosphere. Unlike its American counterpart, the French online community seems to focus on a general attack on all forms of feminism, rather than the promotion of a specific ideology centered on the concept of the "alpha male". This unique feature paves the way for further research.

Feminism appears as a movement of dissatisfied women with psychological and emotional problems. Far from solving the problems, they insist, it only leads the rest of the women into unhappiness and madness. These messages of concern for women's emotional and psychological health are just an excuse. If we understand the gender subtext, the real demand of these groups is a return to the old gender roles and the restitution of the old hierarchies, in which men dominated and women were dominated. According to them, women need to be dominated, they are indecisive and immature beings, and they demand a strong masculinity that pays the bills and, given their inferior rationality, accompanies them in their life process. This highlights the uncomfortable flexibility with which women are treated. They appear in the discourse as extraordinarily sexual beings, who use men according to Machiavellian plans to increase their social status (and as plans, we assume, endowed with instrumental rationality); at the same time, they are criticized for not being sufficiently interested in sexuality and for being irrational and immature beings.

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