How does social media influence young boys to be violent towards women?

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1. Introduction

At the beginning of this year, I watched the Netflix show *Adolescence*, and even only the first episode left me with a lot of thoughts. I remember feeling very uneasy, not just because of the violence in the characters actions and words, but more so, how nobody could really understand how it all happened, especially the people closest to Jamie the main character, his parents. It wasn't just a simple crime with one clear motive, but something much more complex, something rooted in deeper societal issues that are often dismissed as not that important (anymore). What stayed with me most was how invisible the process from normal teen to murderer seemed to be. Ther was not one point that changed it all, because it happened gradually. Almost unnoticeably, Jamie changed, and that is what unsettled me: this idea that something like this could develop so quietly, in the background shaped by influencing voices that can easily be dismissed or overlooked in a life where so much already happens online. I then began to think about the people around me. About how I assume that I would probably notice is something like that were to happen to them. But what if I could not? What if that shift happens in a space many don't fully understand or believe to be very far from reality, only present online? Something I also began to think about more, are the roles we like to attribute to people based on what happened: perpetrator or victim. The women harmed because of men who hurt them are without question victims. Their suffering should and cannot be disregarded, but at the same time, I began to wonder if the young boys, like Jamie, were not also, in a way victims. I asked myself these questions not to excuse their behaviour in any way, but more so to try and understand it. Because these impressionable boys were shaped by ideas, expectations, messages that tell them who they are supposed to be and who to blame if they feel lost, rejected or powerless. It is incredibly scary that young men can very easily be drawn into ideologies that can distort the understanding they have of themselves and others to an extend that they consider violence. That they are being told

repeatedly that women are the problem that their anger towards them is justified and that eventually some act out on these feelings and ideas. I want to explore this process and the world filled with misogyny that is often dismissed that feeds these young boys' toxic ideologies that are not only hurting them, but everybody else, especially women. I am not trying to justify or excuse violent behaviour, but to understand it and to maybe find a way to prevent it by recognising what is happening early enough.

To begin this memoire and the process of understanding why young boys start to develop certain ways of thinking it is important to look at their psychological development during adolescence. What are the factors that influence them and how does their sense of self emerge?

2. Psychological development of adolescent boys

One very important framework to understanding the psychological development of a person is Erik Erikson's theory of psychological development. Erikson suggests that human development occurs through eight stages, that we experience from the day we are born, to the day we die. After the theory of Erik Erikson, human development does not take place in isolation but is strongly influenced by social relationships and experiences. Throughout the lifespan of a person, they are in constant exchange with members of their family, their peers, and other people from their social surroundings. These interactions help with the picture one has of oneself quite a lot. If past conflicts are successfully resolved, this will help with a healthy development in later stages of one's life. If, however, these conflicts are not resolved, this can result in psychological difficulties in one's development. Every one of these development phases concentrates on developing certain important abilities. When individuals successfully get through these phases, their trust in their own abilities will grow. If, however, they fail, this can lead to self-doubt and later to development difficulties. To better understand these stages, a brief overview of Erikson's eight stages is shown in the figure.

Psychosocial Stages: A Summary Chart			
Age	Conflict	Important Events	Outcome
Infancy (birth to 18 months)	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding	Hope
Early Childhood (2 to 3 years)	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	Toilet Training	Will
Preschool (3 to 5 years)	Initiative vs. Guilt	Exploration	Purpose
School Age (6 to 11 years)	Industry vs. Inferiority	School	Confidence
Adolescence (12 to 18 years)	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Social Relationships	Fidelity
Young Adulthood (19 to 40 years)	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Relationships	Love
Middle Adulthood (40 to 65 years)	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Work and Parenthood	Care
Maturity (65 to death)	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	Reflection on Life	Wisdom

We will now go through the two phases that are most relevant for this memoir. These stages are, first, the school age, from 6 to 11 years old, with the conflict between industry and inferiority, and then adolescence, from 12 to 18 years old, with the conflict of identity versus role confusion.

Starting with the school age conflict, industry versus inferiority, during school time, kids will start to compare their abilities with those of their peers and will be confronted with new social as well as school challenges. Positive support and encouragement from parents and teachers can help convey a feeling of competence and trust in oneself. But if one continuously fails or is very strongly criticized, this can lead to feeling bad about yourself and not trusting one's own abilities anymore. These experiences strongly impact self-worth and beliefs in one's own abilities. These conflicts with personal abilities and peer comparison lay the foundation for the identity development of an adolescent.

The most important conflict occurs in adolescent years, identity versus role confusion. Teenagers will intensely confront themselves with their own beliefs, their values, and their future roles to establish a strong sense of identity. This process involves experimenting with different social roles, ideology, or personal goals. If adolescents receive encouragement during this phase, it is more likely that they will build a stable view of themselves and trust in their own abilities as well as beliefs. If, however, this process is disturbed or there is a lack of encouragement, it can lead to uncertainty about who they are and what they stand for. Young men and boys will often feel pressured to act according to certain ideas of masculinity, such as being dominant, which can make identity formation more difficult and increase insecurity. [1] This vulnerability during the development stage can makes teenagers more susceptible to external influences such as harmful online ideologies.

Identity formation is a very important part of adolescence. The word can be understood as the sense of who a person is and what their beliefs and values are and in which roles they see themselves. Building a clear and stable identity is helpful in giving teens a sense of direction and a way to deal with life's challenges effectively. Confidence in own decisions and little dependence on external validation also accompanies a clear sense of self, if however the process of identity formation is interrupted, that can lead to role confusion. That means, that teens might feel uncertain about their beliefs and place in the world. Usually, a lot of adolescents experience internal conflict during this stage, because of who they think they must be and who they actually are. This conflict to "choose" as who they will present themselves creates pressure, that can come from family, peer but also from wider expectations promoted on f.ex. social media. Because of said pressure some teens might feel the need to change in order to fit in, even if that does not reflect them as a person. During adolescence most humans feel a very strong need for belonging, which is why peer influence plays a major role in identity formation. The need to fit in can lead teens to conform to norms and expectations, which can help them to feel accepted, but also shaped their identity thorough other beliefs instead of their own. Since nowadays many adolescents are active on social media, they not only have a real-life identity to uphold, but also an only one, which makes identity formation even harder. Social media creates an even stronger need for approval, which can drive teens to present a certain image, which distances teens even more from their authentic self. Exposure to ideal lives of others, and comparison without end can also increase confusion and lower a person's self-worth. So someone that struggles to find their identity might turn to communities that offer clear answers and give them a strong sense of identity, even if they are based on harmful beliefs.

The exploration of one's identity in adolescence takes place in a way that promotes autonomy and feeling connected. During this important stage of development adolescents begin to make choices based on what they personally see as important or rewarding.

Adolescents are in many ways more advanced than children, yet they are still prone to behave in ways that seem inconstant with adult values or norms. They are very responsive to social pressure and are often described as self-focused and big on risk taking. It is however widely agreed that this is an oversimplification of adolescents, even though this behaviour is still somewhat accurate. Because of this, researchers have tried to develop structures to better explain these patterns. [2]

These models do however not fully consider the importance of identity, for example personal values and self-verification to help motivate teenagers. This then creates a gap, because the self plays a very crucial part in all processes. Considerations related to identity are highly relevant in adolescence and can either promote or prevent risky behaviour depending on the context.

Adolescence is very important for different aspects of the development of identity and finding yourself, motivations and goals. During this stage in life adolescents seek autonomy especially from parents. They show more commitment to social aspects of their identity as well as a very

strong need for connection and belonging with the people their age. They are also ore self-conscious and aware of how others perceive them.

Value-based decision-making acts as a mechanism of motivated behaviour in adolescence, as researchers have found that adolescents often behave in ways that benefit their social life, for example going to a party even though their parents said no, because someone they like will attend said party. This shows that as teenagers grow, their sense of identity becomes more important in guiding their choices and actions. [3]

After looking at what pays a role in the development in adolescence, we will now look at what ideas they can come across on social media that might draw them in and influence them.

3. Online misogynistic ideologies and ideas about manhood

What even is masculinity? Masculinity is a type of gender expression, referencing qualities that are traditionally associated with men. Gender, as we mostly understand it, and gender expression in particular, is a social construct, even though it is often described as “natural” behaviour.

Gender is very fluid in its definition, since it is in constant change thorough different historic times and cultures. In more diverse societies multiple forms of masculinity can coexist.

The socially accepted and idealized form of masculinity is called hegemonic masculinity, which presents the idea that there is a right way to be a man, to be masculine. Hegemonic masculinity is largely unattainable because its definition is fluid (masculinity in general is fluid) and its idealized form is rooted in historical romanticism. Hegemonic masculinity is also inherently misogynistic, as it seeks to oppress gay men, women, and any other genders that deviate from this rigid, stoic vision of masculinity. [4]
Qualities such as heterosexuality, emotional suppression and physical strength are favoured.
Even though this ideal is impossible to fully reach for most, due to factors like sexuality, origin, etc., there is still significant pressure to perform it and to get as close as possible to this standard.

Men are socialised to adopt certain standards that make you masculine, such as distancing themselves from femininity and rejecting anything soft, prioritising success, being resilient all the time and being aggressive and dominant to assert their masculinity. These standards, this form of masculinity is toxic, because it is restrictive and leads to harm of others as well as society.
Toxic masculinity has become more mainstream since it is being promoted on social media, so young boys grow up in a world with this toxic masculinity, and all the expectations it is accompanied by. They hear messages such as boys don’t cry which creates pressure for them to be tough, powerful and show limited emotion. How I already discussed in the previous chapter, young boys feel a extreme need for belonging in their teenage years, and that is

where the pressure to be a certain way comes from.
This can turn harmful when rigidly enforced very quickly. When these young boys are expected to conform to stereotypical masculine ideas, that not only undermines their autonomy but also prevents them from developing their own sense of self. As already discussed, this can lead to low self-esteem issues, but also to aggression and need for overcompensation in behaviours meant to prove their masculinity/manhood. Not conforming to this ideal or not being able can lead to bullying, stress and social exclusion. So rigid masculinity discourages boys to explore a more nurturing, caring and emotionally expressive side of themselves, and reinforces social hierarchies. [5]

Ideas about masculinity are increasingly shaped in different online spaces, particularly in a space called the manosphere. The manosphere is a vast network of things like websites, blogs, and social media communities that claim to address issues men can have such as dating, fitness, or identity, but often promote narrow and aggressive ideas about what it means to be a man and why women are bad. These spaces include groups such as men's rights activists and incels which might be different in some aspects, but are united by their large disregard of feminism and their belief that society is biased against men.
The manosphere has its origins in earlier men's movements in the 1970s and 1980s, which were initially focused on the restrictive nature of traditional gender roles. But over time, feminism and women's empowerment were framed as the ultimate source of men's problems. So, with the rise of the internet and social media, these ideas spread and gained popularity, so the formation of interconnected communities began. The expression red pill for example gained popularity. The term comes from the movie the matrix in which the main character can either choose the red pill and break out of the matrix, or the blue pill which lets him forget that the matrix exists. Men on the internet took these terms and are now comparing themselves to the main character saying they chose the red pill, and can now see, that women are the real oppressors and men the ones being oppressed. [6]

So, at its core, the manosphere highlights the idea that men are disadvantaged in modern society and that feminisms has disrupted the natural order genders. This space promotes the toxic form of masculinity already discussed in the previous part of this chapter, so defined by dominance, physical strength and emotional control. In these spaces men are often positioned as the victims who must reclaim their power. On the other hand, women are depicted in very stereotypical and negative ways and are often reduced to mere assumptions about their behaviour and their intentions. The masnosphere frames them as very manipulative, inferior and as a group holding unfair power over men. In extreme cases, these narratives about women extend can lead to harassment, coercion, and even to violence.
So even though these communities present themselves as spaces for self-improvement, they frequently encourage young boys to build up their identity by putting down other, women in most cases, instead of genuinely help them in their self-development. To draw back to the previous chapter, this can be particularly influential for young men who feel isolated or uncertain about themselves, since these spaces offer a sense of belonging, while still enforcing their ideologies about toxic masculinity. [7]

Very vulnerable men are pushed towards red pill content and similar ideological spaces, which take advantage of their vulnerability, by exploiting their fears and insecurities to radicalize them toward hatred that leads violence and self-destructive behaviours.

A big problem is that society often struggles to discuss these issues openly because in part, we as a society do not like to offend men (and because of violence are also being taught to fear offending men because of the consequences). As a result, white, hetero, cis men are frequently seen as particular individuals rather than as part of a group in society how that would be the case for other social categories like ethnicity or religion. This has contributed to the widespread of the phrase not all men, that is used defensively even though other generalisations are commonly accepted.

Also, while discussing sexual violence or other harm inflicted by men, the media discourse often focuses on female victims and partially blame them with questions like what was she wearing, while rarely analysing male perpetrators as a group. For example, statistics about rape are more likely to be titled as 'how many women are raped' rather than 'how many men commit rape.' This focus reinforces the false narrative that women, or any victims of similar violence are responsible for the harm done to them. There is the myth that rape is this shadowy random danger waiting for women and attacking because of their clothing or them walking alone, rather than it being a deliberate criminal choice made by men, or aggressors in general. To separate the perpetrators that are discussed from all other men, they are often described as monsters or beasts to avoid the idea that harmful behaviours may stem from societal ideologies.

Through shaping boys' attitudes towards women and their self-perception, the manosphere affects entire social ecosystems and makes it rather clearly very dangerous. Those who absorb these messages may then internalise a fragile view of gender by seeing all women as threats and themselves as the ultimate victims. It is very crucial to understand this dual effect of men being both victims of ideology and perpetrators. Recognising it will not excuse any harmful behaviour but more so allow for a more nuanced view of how toxic beliefs propagate and why intervention is so necessary. [8]

4. Psychological mechanism of radicalization

Radicalization has become increasingly important over time and also plays a major part in why certain young boys find their way into toxic only communities that drive them do inflict harm. At its core, radicalization is a psychological process. It can be described as the way that individuals gradually develop extreme beliefs, emotions, and behaviours that then can lead them to support or even engage in violent acts. While one often associates the term "radicalization" with terrorism it applies more broadly to any situation in which an individual adopts extreme views that reject societal values such as democracy or human rights. To now understand how radicalization works, we must understand how beliefs and emotions interact with the mind of a vulnerable individual, which we will explore in this chapter.

To understand a mechanism, it is essential for that mechanisms to be defined first. So once again radicalization refers to the process by which someone adopts extreme beliefs and attitudes that justify violence or disregard others' rights. Radicalization also often includes the promotion of a particular group based on for example religion or race and provokes extremist

behaviour which does not only include violence, but also pressure and actions that may break social norms.
Very important to note is that radicalization is not a single event but a gradual process. A person does not become an extremist over night, but their beliefs emotions and their behaviour shift over time as they reinterpret an revalue life and everything around it/in it.

Something called cognitive opening is one key mechanism. When an individual faces discrimination of any form the beliefs they previously believed in may not suffice them to explain their experiences. This moment of doubt is cognitive opening and makes people more receptive to a new way of thinking and that may include radical ideologies.
There a several psychological factors that contribute to this openness:

1. **Perceived injustice:** When a person feels that the group, they are a part of is unfairly treated that may come across as symbolic or realistic threats from others. Symbolic threats involve the believe that values or beliefs other groups have are wrong while realistic threats involve tangible losses, such as resources. Both can lead to negative emotions and motivate support for extreme solutions.
2. **Absolutistic thinking:** Often people convert their preferences or wishes into musts or should, so for example an individual might believe “the world must be fair, and I cannot stand it when it is not”. These demands absolutistic thinking accompanies are central in radical thinking, as they create anger and frustration when their desired ideal and reality do not match up. This then offers the perfect chance for extremist leaders to offer clear and rigid solutions.
3. **Us-vs-them categorizing:** Cognitive mechanisms encourage the division of the world in in- and out-groups. So, individuals who experience injustice may start to think of their group as superior and others as threat. This makes it easier to justify violence and other extreme behaviours.

Beliefs on their own are rarely enough to drive radicalization since emotions also play a crucial role in the process. Emotional mechanisms intensify cognitive vulnerability which then makes extremist solutions more appealing. Some of the most important emotional drivers are:

1. **Anxiety and uncertainty:** Humans experience emotional distress when they feel uncertain about their lives or identities for example. This personal uncertainty they feel then drives them to seek out groups that can provide clear norms and boundaries to identity. That is something extremist groups often do have to offer; a rigid ideology that reduces ambiguity and offers easy meaning.
2. **Anger and frustration:** When an individual perceives that they are being treated unjust that triggers anger which can then transform into the desire for revenge to restore perceived fairness. In combination with absolutistic thinking anger will more likely be focused on out-groups, reinforcing us-vs-them dynamics.
3. **Need for control:** Feeling powerless in complex social contexts can easily be put to a stop with extremist ideologies that often provide a sense of control and agency by convincing individuals that they can right perceived wrongs through actions, sometimes violence.
4. **Compensatory self-esteem:** Compensation of feelings of weakness or worthlessness may also happen through extreme beliefs and behaviours, so for example someone

who individually feels insignificant might join a group that promises things such as heroism, so offering a sense of value and power.

All together these emotional factors create a very strong base for radicalization, especially when they are paired with cognitive mechanisms.

Since us human are social beings, group dynamics play a huge role in the process of radicalization. Many vulnerable individuals seek identity and belonging especially in times of personal uncertainty or social isolation. So, something extremist groups like to provide are:

1. **Clear social identity:** They define who does and who doesn't belong to reduce self-uncertainty and provide a plan for how members of the group should think feel and behave. Social identity theory explains that people derive a part of their self-concept from groups they belong to.
2. **Shared purpose and goals:** Often these groups provide a sense of meaning and encourage members to focus on collective goals rather than personal ones. This strengthens commitment to the ideology.
3. **Reinforced beliefs and echo chambers:** In these extremist groups individuals are constantly exposed to reinforcement of extreme beliefs and social pressure discourages from questioning said beliefs which makes them more resistant to change.
4. **Role of leaders:** These groups are often led by charismatic people who exploit cognitive and emotional vulnerabilities. They present themselves as guide and offer simple answers to complex problems. They often appeal to absolutistic thinking and personal grievances and frame extreme actions as necessary and morally justified.

So, radicalization is best understood as a complex interplay of cognitive, emotional and social mechanisms. These then reinforce each other:

- Cognitive vulnerabilities such as perceived injustice and absolutistic thinking enhance emotional distress which then motivates group-seeking behaviour
- Then again group belonging satisfies emotional needs which then further strengthens radical beliefs.
- And leaders exploit existing vulnerabilities by giving rationalizations for extreme actions.

For example, a young individual perceives their community as oppressed feels anger and frustration. These emotions joined with personal uncertainty makes the person much more receptive to extremist ideologies that promise them justice. Also joining a group reinforces identity and provides emotional support while also justifying possible violence against enemy groups.

More so, there are two factors that often appear in radicalization: low frustration tolerance and global evaluation of human worth.

1. **Low frustration tolerance:** An individual believes they cannot tolerate discomfort or any type of unfairness. This then leads to quick and extreme reactions to perceived problems. That is the exact reason extremist ideologies may appear appealing.
2. **Global evaluation of human worth:** People judge others and themselves.

3. **Global evaluation of human worth**: People often judge themselves and others in absolute terms, so good vs bad, worthy or worthless. Extremist thinking encourages this categorical evaluation of out-groups as evil and in-groups as better. This again can help justify violent behaviour.

Both factors interact with cognitive and emotional mechanism deepening vulnerability to radicalization**.**

Concluding this chapter, we understand that radicalization is not simple. It is a result of multiple interacting psychological mechanisms including cognitive vulnerabilities, emotional drivers and social identity process. Cognitive opening is triggered by perceived injustice, absolutistic thinking and a personal low tolerance for uncertainty then combines with emotional distress like anger or frustration. Then social mechanisms, particularly group belonging and charismatic leadership, reinforce these vulnerabilities which creates a strong base that makes it easier to introduce extremist beliefs and behaviours. [9]

5. From online to real world violence- *Adolescence* (2025) as example

As already stated in the introduction the show *Adolescence* is what made the subject of this memoire pop into my head.
The British show centers around a 13-year-old schoolboy called Jamie, who is arrested for the murder of a girl in his school in the very first episode. As the investigation goes on, we discover that the reason he murdered Katie is rooted in social media, cyberbullying and the manosphere. He is bullied by Katie and others over social media and then rejected when he confesses his feelings for her, so he stabs her to death.
I believe it is a wonderful example to showcase how young boys are radicalized and what that can result in, therefore I will be using Adolescence as an example of how adolescent development and online influence interact. Therefore, we will now look at the show and link it back to all the previous chapters, to understand where the problem is rooted and how this process can be stopped.

At its core Jamie's story is not only about crime, but also about identity and development. Adolescence is, as already discussed in the second chapter, a very crucial stage of development in which young people begin to build a sense of who they are or want to be. This process is accompanied by uncertainty, social pressure and a strong need for belonging, all things, that Jamie's is probably also going through. More so, these issues are intensified rather than supported, by the bullying.
If we follow Erikson theory Jamie is in the phase of identity vs. role confusion which he struggles with because it seems hard for him to position himself within his social environment but also because he does not appear to have a stable sense of self, which is normal for his age, and instead tries to define himself through how others perceive and treat him. The bullying he experiences reinforces his feelings of rejection and not belonging, so rather than being able to explore who he is, his development is shaped by negative feedback, exclusion and humiliation.

The ongoing rejection then contributes to growing confusion about his own identity which makes him feel frustrated and insecure. As explained by Erikson's theory failing to successfully navigate this stage can result in role confusion, which in Jamie's case seems to only ever deepen over time.
Something that could now help him immensely, would be a strong support system, which he lacks. His family is in disbelief when they hear about the murder, and don't believe it to be true, which shows that they had no idea about the negative development of their own son. They did not hear about the bullying either, which shows, that there seems to a certain lack of emotional care and communication between both parties. It is completely normal for a child to distance themselves from their parents at some point in adolescence, but Jamie's feelings of not being understood and probably feelings of humiliation made him create a gap between his parents and himself, and they let him. He is then led to look for support and validation elsewhere, which can lead him to dangerous places.

There is a very interesting ad on YouTube from Smartphone free childhood us, which showcases wonderfully how dangerous it can be to leave your children unsupervised when it comes to the internet. In the video, a father says good night to his son, who is already in be, but before leaving he tells him, that" in one corner of your room, there is a box with all the pornography ever created, and in the other corner is a man, that is going to tell you hateful stuff like "feelings are for losers" all night long. Also, the mean girls from your school are going to be in here and talk badly about you all night, and the Russian hacker next to you is not going to stop asking you for your password. But I trust you to ignore it all, love you bye". He then leaves his kid alone with all these possibilities without guidance or restrictions, which could very likely come to hurt the kid. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_xwJ5u9I8o
A similar thing seems to be happening to Jamie, with the exception, that his parents likely know less about the internet than him.

A very key part of this missing support is the absence of a strong and positive role model. During Adolescence that is something very important in identity formation, as role models can provide guidance on how to think and how to behave as well on how to understand oneself. For young men and boys, role models also shape the way the perceive masculinity, emotions and relationships. As I see it, there does not appear to be such a figure in Jamie's life. His father seems emotionally distant and not in touch with his own emotions, which may be what prevented Jamie from learning how to process and express his own feelings in a healthy way. It is possible that instead he internalized ideas, because of his father's behaviour, that emotions should be suppressed rather than communicated.

Without strong role model, young boys may be more prone to search for one elsewhere, and in today's world, that often means turning to online figures. Some things these figures often promote, are ideas about masculinity, presenting dominance, control and emotional detachment as desirable traits. These Influencers have gained massive popularity by promoting the view that men are victims and women the problem. Names that frequently pop up in this conversation are form example Andrew Tate. As Jamie is still a young boy, that is already insecure and searching for direction these messages could be very appealing to him because they offer simple explanations and a very clear identity to follow.

This then connects closely to the role social media plays today and also algorithmic influence. Adolescents spend more of their time on their phone, online often without supervision. And since platforms are designed in a way that reinforces engagement by suggesting more content based on previous interactions, we are driven to consume increasingly. So once a young person shows slight interest in a topic, they will gradually be exposed to more extreme versions of the same content. What might start as a harmless self-improving journey can shift into more radical and toxic ideologies. A factor that also plays some part in this, is that over time our brain becomes less satisfied with mild content and seeks something stronger to reach the same level of happiness as before, which further increases exposure to extreme narratives.

In the case of Jamie, it is very likely that his online activity played a major role in shaping his beliefs since he is not only exposed to harmful content but also exposed directly to cyberbullying from his peers. Social media has therefore become a place of negativity and rejection to him, while also replacing real world interactions and creating isolation and making him even more prone to being radicalized by alternative perspectives.

This leads back to the fundamental human need for belonging which tends to be even stronger in adolescence. As already discussed, teenagers seek acceptance and validation as well as a sense of identity within a social group. Jamie is not able to find connection in his immediate environment, as we already observed, so as a result he is more likely to seek belonging elsewhere, in online communities. These may offer validation, but only if the required conditions are met, which frequently consists in shared beliefs, resentment and ideology. So, at this point Jamie's emotional vulnerability becomes particularly important, as his rejection, loneliness and insecurity create the psychological state we looked at earlier where simple explanations become increasingly attractive. So rather than dealing with his emotions he may be drawn to narratives that assign blame and offer him control.

This is where the process of radicalization begins to shape Jamie. This process happening within him can be understood step by step. It starts with his confusion and insecurity linked to identity development. This is then followed by the exposure to harmful content and negative experiences, like bullying. These experiences create a cognitive opening that we discussed already earlier, which is the moment in which previous beliefs no longer are enough to explain reality which makes Jamie more receptive to new ideas.

There are several psychological mechanisms that then contribute to the deepening of these new beliefs. Perceived injustice is the one Jamie strongly feels, since he feels treated unjust by his peers, especially Katie, not only because of the bullying, but also the romantic rejection. This then leads to anger and frustration in Jamie. Something he also may start to do is start to categorize in us vs them, since it makes it easier to blame others, especially women and justify negative attitudes or even violence toward them. He may not have felt remorseful of killing Katie, since she way them, she way the enemy and deserved to die. Social dynamics then further reinforce these ideas, as online communities provide belonging while constantly repeating and validating extremist views. These then become internalized and start to shape Jamie's behaviour.
So, what happens is firstly exposure, then this gets reinforced and finally internalized. It might begin as curiosity but then turns into affixed belief system. In Jamie's case that may include

viewing women as the problem and men as the ultimate victims. These beliefs then influence his interpretation of his experiences including being rejected by Katie.
As a result, his behaviour changes, he starts to withdraw, spend more time online and shows increased aggression. His empathy toward certain groups may start to decrease and his beliefs of how the world is more rigid.

So ultimately all these factors contribute to his final act of violence, murder. It is not an isolated event, but more so the outcome of a complex process involving identity struggles, emotional vulnerability, social isolation and then the exposure to extremist, harmful ideology. It shows how multiple influences can interact and escalate over time.

In conclusion, Jamie is a murderer and must be punished for his actions, but that is not the message of this show. He fell victim to harmful ideologies and was not surrounded by people that noticed or stopped these beliefs from becoming solid in his mind. His actions are not okey because of this, but this process explains to us, that it is not enough to punish boys, since it is possible to prevent the process of going this far. The problem needs to be addressed; the process needs to be stopped. This show illustrates how adolescents' vulnerabilities can easily be exploited, so that needs to change, they need to be educated and protected.

6. Prevention

As stated in the last chapter, what need to be done is prevention, since punishing young boys for their crimes does not necessarily stop others from falling into the same trap. The root causes need to be addressed, and to effectively do that, there needs to a multi-level approach.

Young boys and very importantly their parents/legal guardians need to be educated on the matter. There must be more understanding of algorithms and how dangerous they and the internet in general can be. There needs to be a talk about at what ages teenagers should get access to the internet, specifically social media, and that if they do that there has to be supervision, to prevent them to fall into dangerous spaces they do not understand without anyone's noticing. Young boys also need to be educated on questioning narratives and be taught that everyone has the same worth and that us vs them thinking can lead them into dangerous territory.

But that is not the only level education would be important in, since proper education on emotions and their importance is long due. Especially young boys need to be taught how to express themselves on an emotional level and that that is not at all a bad thing. There needs to be an understanding, that emotional vulnerability does not equal weakness, but power, because understanding and properly communication one's own emotions strengthen us and our relationships with others. We need to counter what is being taught in toxic spaces online and get young boys and men in general to stop supressing the things that they feel.
Something that also needs countering, is our view of masculinity. We need to challenge the belief that dominance-based masculinity is good for anyone and start normalizing that being empathic, respectful and emotionally open is more the right way to be masculine.

Something that is also incredibly important is family and the role it plays. Something that could have massively helped Jamie from adolescence is his family, but they were not so present in his life anymore. Connection is important, since it reinforces happiness and belonging, and that is something a close connection to one's own family would provide. So, we need to teach the importance of open communication and emotional support within families, since this also means noticing as soon as someone start to change in a negative way, which is very important in prevention.

Something that also needs addressing is the role isolation and loneliness play, since they represent a major risk factor and, as already stated prevent early intervention, which is possibly the most crucial element.

To have an early intervention it is important that we observe and identify warning signs such as withdrawal, extremist beliefs and hostility. We need to pay close attention if someone comes across as suspicious so that there can be an intervention before things escalate. Then there's needs to ne mental health support, to repair the damage that was already made. Safe spaces to talk, reducing stigma and accessible counselling being very important.

Changing societal discourse is also very important, yet hard do change. But we absolutely must stop focusing on victims when looking for reason and for someone to blame. They need to be protected, and the light has to be projected on the perpetrators since they are the ones at fault.

So, in conclusion we need to create awareness about the internet and harmful beliefs, while also teaching the importance of emotional openness. Young boys need to be able to create their identity, find belonging and purpose without the existence of harmful ideologies so that they can develop healthily.

7. Conclusion

Looking back at everything we explored throughout this memoire the thing that becomes very clear is that the transformation from adolescence to violence does not come suddenly but gradual and is rooted in different psychological and social processes. What initially may appear as a simple individual act of brutality is in many cases the result of many interacting factors that develop gradually over time and often go unnoticed by those around the concerned person.

At the centre of this memoire stands the question of how social media can drive young impressionable and uncertain adolescents to adopt harmful beliefs that may ultimately lead them to inflict actual violence. As we examine adolescents' development, the pressure of identity formation, the influence online misogynistic ideologies have and the psychological mechanisms of radicalization it becomes easily evident that these processes are not in fact isolated. They are in fact deeply interconnected and reinforce one another in ways very difficult to detect in a first instance.

Adolescence is, as already discussed a crucial stage of development of any person while also being a time marked by a lot of negative emotions and new needs. Adolescents are also particularly sensitive to external influences because their identity is still in the making. So, if this process is supported by positive relationships and guidance that can lead to a healthy development of the self, if however, that is not the case, and they experience rejection and isolation, they begin to search for answers elsewhere.

Here the online world comes into play, since social media and online communities do not only offer constant access to information but also to ideologies and communities that may not exist in the real life of someone. While this may be positive in some cases, it can also expose teenagers to harmful extremist ideologies, a risk that is further intensified because of algorithms. The manosphere, as explored, is one of these spaces that pose a risk for young boys that already feel insecure, rejected or uncertain. They offer simple explanations and divide the world in us vs them mentality while also giving these lonely teens a sense of belonging, even if that may be though hateful beliefs.

As already seen the process of radicalization then build on this vulnerability and reinforce the ideas spread in toxic online communities even more. These beliefs are then internalized over time and shape the way individuals perceive themselves and others.

The case study of Jamie in the series Adolescence illustrates this process rather perfectly. A story that shocked me when I first saw it, that I now, through this memoire have come to understand. His story shows how identity struggles, lack of support and then exposure to harmful online content can interact and then escalate over time. It shows us, that this is a process, which is good news because that means we have enough time to intervene.

So again, what is very important now, is to recognize the complexity of the process, not to excuse harmful behaviour but to understand it, how it develops so that it can be prevented entirely. Prevention as discussed in the previous chapter involves education, awareness, emotional support and societal change. Young people and the people around them need to be equipped with the tools necessary to navigate the insecurities adolescence brings with it in a world where social media plays a crucial, everyday role.

For me, this memoire started with a sense of unease and confusion, my reaction to a story that felt very realistic. That unease stays with me, but it is now accompanied by a clearer understanding of the processes behind the story. Understanding the patterns of this process is the very first step toward change. If this process can be recognized it can be interrupted. So, it is important to notice the warning signs as early as possible so that an immediate intervention can be made.

In the end, to me this memoire is not only about explaining a problem but also highlighting the importance of awareness, because what makes these issues so unsettling next to its severity its invisibility. The changes within a person that lead to radicalization and violence often happened quietly and, in the background, shaped by influences that are very easy to overlook.

Making these processes visible for everyone to sees is therefore essential. Only when we understand how they works can we start to address them and support those at risk by creating an environment in which young people can develop their identities in a healthy and safe way.

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