



# Angry Young Men

A look inside extreme online communities

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The aim of the partnership is to develop and support initiatives and projects that strengthen the resilience in children and youth against radicalization.

Center for Digital Youth Care stand behind the editorial content of this publication. The content is, therefore, not indicative of the Partnerships collective opinions and views.

# Dear reader,

**We're publishing this magazine for professionals in order to focus on an overlooked part of our population: The angry, young men who are vulnerable and isolated from social relations and communities, and therefore at risk of being lost by society.**

Basing our approach on our desire to constantly learn more about the digital lives of young people, we spent the first six months of 2019 uncovering how a lot of young men find their way to crude, politically incorrect and - in the eyes of "ordinary people" - unacceptable platforms and forums, where they are integrated in communities often missing in the "real" world.

In these forums, many angry young men are confirmed in their beliefs that it's not them who are at fault, but the world. They convince themselves and each other that they are unlovable and revolting and that they don't deserve respect, much less the right to live. They bond over being the losers of society and support each other in their conviction that their challenges are all due to factors outside their control. A few of them even believe that the injustice they feel demands action and actively encourage uprisings.

You may think: Well, these men are only angry behind the screen, so what harm can it do in the real world? But the digital world IS the real world. For certain individuals in this group, it may be even more real than the physical world. And as you can

read on the following pages, there are examples where a few of these angry, young men have taken their frustrations out on innocent bystanders in the physical world.

This target group is interesting because we, as professionals, haven't got a good hold on them. And most of us don't understand them very well. For this reason, it has been important for us to create awareness and understanding of the existence of this group and, especially of their experiences of being excluded from society. With this publication, we put this culture on the point and explore their characteristics.

We bring forth a sketching of the target group and the online communities in which they thrive. We do this in order to kick in the door for greater understanding in you about an online world often shut for the non-initiated.

During this process, we will present recommendations for you, as a professional, as well as for parents who are worried about their child and who don't know what to do.

We have been working intensively with youth behavior in online communities through the last 15 years, and the viewpoints in this publication are based primarily on our own research and observations from different extreme online youth environments. We look forward to more research-based knowledge in this area in the future.

Happy reading!

**"Well this is my last video. It all has to come to this. Tomorrow is the day of retribution, the day in which I will have my revenge against humanity. Against all of you. For the last eight years of my life, ever since I hit puberty, I've been forced to endure an existence of loneliness, rejection and unfulfilled desires. All because girls have never been attracted to me. Girls gave their affection and sex and love to other men, but never to me"**

Perpetrator of the Isla Vista killings in 2014

# The uprising has begun

Over the last years, a new type of hate preachers, mass murderers and terrorists have emerged. Angry, young men get together in online communities and assure each other that everyone else is at fault: Women, the jews, muslims and mass media are blamed in an attempt to place the blame for the decay of society or the misery of the men themselves. And certain individuals even believe that these "problems" should be solved using violence.

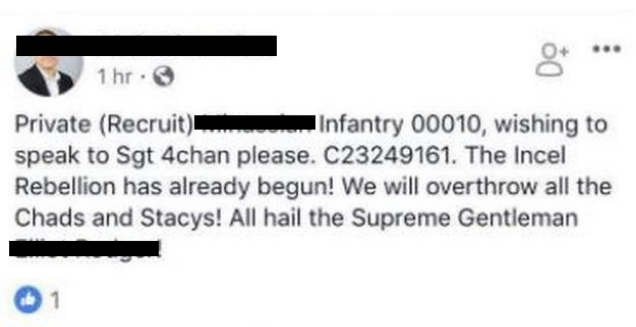
Murdering innocents has been encouraged, planned and transmitted through digital forums, and the perpetrators have been hailed as martyrs and heroes online in a kind of *micro-radicalization* – a term coined by Professor Michael Bang Petersen of Aarhus BSS.

Six innocent people were killed and 14 wounded by gunshots and car collisions when a 22-year old perpetrator, in a blood frenzy, allowed his anger to hurt the community of Isla Vista, California in 2014. His selfie-video and manifest was shared on TV worldwide, and despite the collective horror of the attack, the perpetrator was martyred by a new digital sub-group of men who hate women. The INCEL-movement had found its figurehead.

In the same fashion, the terrorist attack in Christchurch, NZ, where 51 Muslims were killed by a 28-year old Australian male, were preceded by a digital manifest and virtual live-streaming.

The 28-year old killed these people in order to "protect society against the growing islamification."

Recently, we have seen two more attacks committed by radicalized, white men who had been frequenting these online forums. The perpetrators behind the Walmart-attack in El Paso and the attempted terrorist attack at a mosque in Norway were both angry, white males who saw it as their job to "do something" about the mass immigration of, respectively, Latinos in the USA and Muslims in Scandinavia.



*Other mass murderers have lauded the Isla Vista killings as the beginning of the INCEL-movement. In Toronto, 10 people were killed and 16 wounded in 2018 during an attack meant as a tribute to the Isla Vista perpetrator.*

In Denmark, attacks on minorities and women are praised online. At the same time, certain people are encouraging participation or similar actions:

**They think that they fucking own it all... send that shit home.**

**Those pakis need to get the fuck out of DK... if I were a policeman, I would have made them taste my cudgel TWICE!!!**

**BOMB ALL OF THEM**

**Weapons should have been drawn, and the first monkey who didn't comply should have been removed.**

These are but a few examples of comments posted to a video on YouTube depicting a Danish politician burning off a Quran in a primarily Muslim neighbourhood. He is flanked by 3-4 political supports, but on the Internet, the amount of support is massive.

### **Reasonable misogyny**

The perpetrators behind the Isla Vista & Christchurch-attacks have found support and motivation in digital groups for incels and the Alt-Right-movement. It's often vulnerable or hurt young men who find the answer to their misery in the struggle against "the others". Incels believe that women suppress and manipulate men. The Alt-Right sees multiculturalism and "strangers" as an attack on society. These men feel misunderstood by their physical environment and powerless. They call for a revolution where they, and their digital comrades-in-arms, can seize power through violence, murder and manipulation.

### **Manifests & forum-parties**

Several of the terror attacks the last couple of years have been followed by the publication of manifests. Herein, the perpetrators express their opinions on which minorities or social classes who are responsible for their "need to kill". The Isla Vista killer wrote, among other things, the following

about one of the online communities that he had been in:

**"...fyldt med mænd, der er seksuelt udsultede, præcist som jeg. Mange af dem har deres egne teorier om, hvad kvinder er tiltrukket af, og mange af dem deler mit had til kvinder, selvom de, modsat jeg, er for kujonagtige til at handle på det. Mange af mine teorier om, hvor onde og rådne kvinder egentlig er, blev bekræftet, når jeg læste opslagene. [Her kunne jeg se] hvor dystert og grusomt verden er på grund af kvinders ondskab."**

It was everyone else's fault. The Christchurch attacker asks in his manifest, "Why is no one doing anything?" (In regards to the Muslim immigration/invasion, ed.), and concludes with the question: "Why shouldn't I just do something?"

The mass murder of Utøya, Norway in 2011 was followed by a manifest about "cleansing Norway of cultural Marxism" which was allowing the immigration of "strangers". Violence was not a goal – it was a necessity.

When young men experience exclusion from the physical community in their schools, homes or the local youth environment, they often seek out digital communities. Movements like the Incels and Alt-Right offer these people an explanation and apology for their misery and create communities where they confirm each other in the belief that vulnerability isn't their fault, and that "the others" have rendered happiness, justice and power impossible. You discuss how to prove that it's all "their fault", and how to fix the problem.

Vulnerability becomes a community, a purpose and a direction: Fight the enemy with everything at your disposal.

**When young men experience exclusion from the physical community in their schools, homes or the local youth environment, they often seek out digital communities**

# The young who lose themselves online

**It's nothing new that certain young individual feel excluded from ordinary social space. Today, however, we see a tendency of these excluded groups getting together in online environments, where the big questions in life are discussed – politics, philosophy and religion. The alienation from "the norm" can lead to a counterculture, and the digital space becomes a cave in which manipulation, assault and violence are discussed and commented upon. "The others" are blamed for the misery of the vulnerable young, and plans of revolution and revenge are planned.**

Young people seek out other young people. As a young person, you need a social circle and being in order to feel accepted. Most young people have these needs fulfilled through friendships and social hobbies. However, not everyone can handle fitting into the classical social framework. For some people, being social is such a challenge that they decide to forfeit values and principles in exchange for a spot in the social circle. This social challenge can come from many places – problems at home or in school, mental vulnerability, illness, disease and so on. The common denominator is that some young people want to fit in a social community so bad that they will do, say or believe in anything to be a part of it.

The physical social arenas such as the schoolyard can, in the eyes of certain individuals, seem too difficult or incomprehensible. Instead, they decide to seek out the digital space, where the social rules are made absolutely clear, and where opinions are transparent.

## **Radikalisering fysisk og digitalt**

We are used to thinking of radicalization as a process where shady types brainwash or recruit vulnerable youth, usually under the guise of a common interest in, for example, football, motorcycles or other communities. A narrative is created: If you want to be part of the group, you have to THINK like the group. These young people, who desperately search for a social circle, will be vulnerable to this kind of pressure. Suddenly, the line between

being a football-fan and being a neo-Nazi seems awfully blurry, and what started out as need to find a place to belong ends out in destructive counterculture.

Digital environments are often harder to imagine than the physical ones, but just like the football or motorcycle club, they can shape opinions and values. Coarse humor aimed at minorities, hate speech disguised as memes or political smear-campaigns might just seem like part of the background noise online, but these things affect and form daily life and the worldview of certain young people – especially those who prefer the digital society.

When we expand upon the idea that only physical contact creates a risk of recruitment or radicalization by including the online community, we create the opportunity to understand this group of online, vulnerable people: The young people who don't feel that they can succeed in the classical physical space, and who instead seek communities in various gaming-boards, joke-sites and social media platforms.

## **Counterculture confirmed behind the screen**

We know from our experience with online debate culture how difficult decoding social situations online can be. We often see how online debates escalate and end up looking like rhetorical trench warfare more than anything else. You defend your own digital standpoint by attacking its presumed offen-



der hard in a digital format which is itself leading to a kind of micro-radicalization. This, in turn, can lead to young people moving away from big social media – like Facebook or Instagram – and isolate themselves on 4Chan or closed Discord-channels, where they only meet likeminded people.

This also creates an arena where you can discuss and fight with philosophical opponents and, through this, define your community and sense of belonging.

In this way, a potential process of radicalization can take place without actual physical contact between members of the community, while also eliminating any talk of “lone wolfs”. This is the case when the perpetrator takes action isolated from his or her peers. In the digital space, the process of radicalization may not be face-to-face, but it’s still human-to-human.

#### **Moving on from a religious focus**

“Radicalization” has, for many years, been considered an extreme end of a religious spectrum; If you become too consumed by religious doctrines, you become a radical. For many years, the media has been telling this story as well – that radicalization most often is about warriors in Syria or fanatic Muslims (very rarely Christians) who try to take over the world through violence and intimidation.

But radicalization can also come from political positions, gender-oriented groups or as an uprising against established society or certain groups that live herein, for completely other reasons. Radicalization is the extremity of an oppositional society-agenda – a counterculture.

The target group of this project are vulnerable young people. We know from experience that young people who are not well socially can isolate themselves from the physical space and have their primary, sometimes exclusive, social contact through digital media like games, discussion-forums and chat-environments. In this space, humor, seriousness, irony and sarcasm can be so hard to decipher that they blend together and become impossible to distinguish between. The great need to be accepted in a social circle can therefore lead to an extreme sense of humor and tone being misunderstood or over-interpreted. This can lead to the young person considering the humor and the tone a set of values needed to properly integrate into this group.

This group of vulnerable youth won’t necessarily seek out a community outside of the digital world in order to strengthen their radicalization or to be confirmed. If the “classic” (offline) space is already filled with *blue-pilled normies* (see explanation on page 34), it’s easier and safer to stay behind the screen and discuss the coming revolution.

**In this publication, we use the word “radicalization” as a process wherein non-democratic measures – like violence, attacks, manipulation and so on – are used or accepted for a political or societal purpose.**