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Hegemonic masculinity and right-wing populism. The case of *Chega*.

SOPHIE VAN DER DOES

Master in Sociology

Supervisors:

Doctor PEDRO VASCONCELOS, Associate Professor
Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon

Doctor ANA ESPÍRITO-SANTO, Assistant Professor
Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon

September, 2022

SOCIOLOGIA
E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

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Resumo

A direita radical é dominada por homens, e, no entanto, há pouca investigação sobre o papel da masculinidade na criação deste apoio. Na minha tese, analiso esta lacuna teórica através de um partido populista de direita emergente em Portugal, chamado *Chega*. Faço duas contribuições: procuro iluminar o papel da masculinidade no apelo ideológico de *Chega*, e ao fazê-lo, procuro lançar luz sobre o que o caso português nos pode dizer sobre o papel da masculinidade e da extrema-direita em geral. Para explorar a ligação entre a masculinidade e o populismo de direita do *Chega*, conduzo uma análise discursiva sobre os programas políticos do partido e a sua conta no *Twitter*. A minha análise mostra que a masculinidade tem um papel importante no desempenho populista deste partido, e sustenta mesmo a sua orientação populista. Por outras palavras, o uso da masculinidade fortalece o apelo populista do *Chega*, uma vez que é usada para reforçar o antagonismo principal entre 'o povo' e 'a elite'. No entanto, embora a masculinidade enquanto tal nunca seja explicitamente tematizada, mostro que está sempre a trabalhar em segundo plano. Assim, o caso português mostra que o género é parte integrante central do populismo de extrema-direita.

Palavras-chave: sociologia política, masculinidade e populismo de extrema-direita, Chega, *mobilizations frames*, sociologia da masculinidade.

Abstract

The radical-right is dominated by men, and yet there is little research on the role of masculinity in creating this support. In my thesis, I look into this theoretical gap by means of an emerging right-wing populist party in Portugal, called *Chega*. I make two contributions: illuminate the role of masculinity played in *Chega*'s ideological appeal, and whilst doing so, shed light on what the Portuguese case can tell us about the role of masculinity and the extreme-right at large. To explore the link between masculinity and *Chega*'s right-wing populism, I conduct a discourse analysis on the party's political programs and their Twitter account. My analysis shows that masculinity plays an important role on the populist performance of this party, as it underpins its populist direction. In other words, the use of masculinity strengthens *Chega*'s populist appeal, as it is used to reinforce the main antagonism between 'the people' and 'the elite'. However, even though masculinity as such is never explicitly thematized by *Chega,* I show that masculinity is at work in the background. Thus, the Portuguese case shows that gender is integral to the populist aspects of the far-right.

Keywords: political sociology, masculinity and right-wing populism, Chega, mobilizations frames, sociology of masculinity

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Introduction

The radical-right is disproportionately supported by men, and yet there is little research on the role of masculinity in creating this support. Even though it seems that radical-right voters, activists and politicians are predominantly male, few researchers in political sociology have made this fact the focus of their research. Some have attributed this lack of theorization to the "de-gendering" of men, and the corresponding assumption that only women have a gender identity (Carver 2006: 450). Other scholars have mainly looked at women's aversion to the radical-right, or at the consequence of economic changes in men's particular support for the radical-right. However, it seems that gender, specifically masculinity, plays an important role in the appeals of the radical-right, even though not much is known about the role of men *as men* for the radical-right's political agenda (Kimmel 1993: 30). My thesis aims to make up for this theoretical gap and looks specifically at the uses of masculinity in the populist radical-right. My question is: how is masculinity used in the Portuguese populist radical-right? I will look at masculinity in the populist radical-right by means of a case study of an emerging radical-right party called *Chega* (*Enough*, in English). I hope to make two contributions: illuminate the role of masculinity played in *Chega's* ideological appeal, and, whilst doing so, shed light on what the Portuguese case can tell us about the role of masculinity and the extreme-right at large.

I will draw on content analysis of *Chega's* political communication on Twitter as well as their electoral program. My analysis shows that *Chega*'s use of masculinity underpins its populist direction. That is, *Chega*'s uses of masculinity strengthens their populist project. However, masculinity as such is never directly thematized by *Chega.* Rather, masculinity is obscured by the right-wing program that allows *Chega* to position themselves as the party that stands up for the authentic 'Good Portuguese'. [1] The Portuguese case shows that gender is integral to the populist aspect of the far-right. In other words, attacking the elites and attacking Others within the nation happens as an attempt to restore a lost sense of masculine entitlement and traditional manhood.

This thesis is structured as follows: first, I will review the literature on gender and the radical-right and argue that one should not reduce men's support for the right to a mere consequence of economic changes associated with globalization and modernization. Second I explore the concept of masculinity related to right-wing authoritarianism and connect this with ideas on masculinity and the nation-state. Third, I use insights from political philosophers Axel

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[1] In this thesis, I use double quotes (" ") to cite. Single quotes (' ') are used to signal a contentious concept or word.

Honneth and Nancy Fraser on social recognition to set a hypothesis. Fourth, I elaborate on my case study, the Portuguese populist radical-right party *Chega*, and discuss methodology and methods. Fifth, I discuss the results of my analysis. Lastly, I conclude my analysis and identify possible shortcomings as well as ideas for further research.

CHAPTER 1

Literature review

1.1. Gender and the radical-right

The right is on the rise. In the last decades we have seen a significant increase in populist right-wing leadership in Europe and beyond. According to a study done in 2019 by Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index, right-wing populist parties increased their voter support by 33 percent in the last four years (Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index 2019). The rapport also mentions that right-wing populist parties are becoming more mainstream as they are now part of every third European government. While right-wing populist parties in Europe are by no means ideologically homogenous, they share a number of unifying concerns. Mudde argues that far-right populist parties all strive for a monocultural state hostile to 'alien' influences and this shared commitment to nativism in right-wing populism should be seen as a key feature, that Mudde calls a "pathological normalcy" (2010: 1167). In his minimal definition of populism, Mudde (2004: 543) describe populism as a

> "…thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and the 'corrupt elite' and argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* (general will of the people)."

Even though this conceptualization of populism does not mention gender specifically, Mudde and Kaltwasser also argue elsewhere that "populist actors do not operate in a cultural or ideological vacuum" (2015: 16) and that wider national culture should be considered if we want to determine their gender position. Within right-wing populism, gender differences are, like all other differences within 'the people' seen as irrelevant to politics (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2015: 16). After all, 'the people' are seen as a homogenous bloc. If gender-relations are a topic at all, then it is primarily as a function in the nativist struggle against 'the elite' that threatens the 'pure people' (Mudde 2007: 96).

And yet, for researchers of the radical-right, gender surely is a very prominent issue. Emerging right-wing populist parties have been described as misogynist and sexist, gender conservative, and valorizing a "strong-man" style of political leadership (Inglehart &Norris 2016: 7). Moreover, a closer look at radical-right parties reveals that 'the people' are constructed in narrow ethno-nationalistic terms. Non-native elements (people or ideas) are seen as an external fundamental threat (Taggart 2000: 95). In other words, 'the people' as well as 'the elite' are projected as homogeneous groups, when in fact, they are not, and this evidently

poses a problem. When talking about groups, be it elites, or refugees, or the 'pure people', those groups comprise people from different nationalities, religions, genders, socio-economic backgrounds and education. By defining a homogenous out-group, an insider group is constituted on the basis of a dichotomy: the corrupted elite versus the 'pure people'. Later in this thesis we will see that the 'corrupted elite' and those who not belong to the in-group sometimes overlap. Let me point out for now that excluding the Other[2] helps to build one's own (national) identity, and this antagonism is seen as a key feature of the radical-right populism at large (Mudde 2004; Muller 2016: 20; Taggart 2000: 95).

The previous remarks bring me to another shared characteristic of the radical-right: their traditional and stereotypical views on gender roles, in which the "natural differences" between men and women are strictly defended, albeit in different ways (Mudde 2007: 92). The radical-right often reduces women entirely to mothers who, as Mudde maintains, "have a duty to secure the survival of the nation by providing and raising multiple offspring" (Mudde 2007: 92). Indeed, many feminist scholars have pointed to the way in which female bodies are seen as crucial for the reproduction of the nation (Nagel 1998). However, Mudde also points out that these stereotypical views on gender roles are not a consistent attitude among the entire radical-right (Mudde 2007: 92). Even though most radical-right parties share the view that women have a particular role as housewives and mothers, there are also political parties who adopt a more nuanced position, or are in favor of women having a career, for example (Mudde 2007: 92). However, despite important differences between right-wing populist parties, it is not a stretch to say that the radical-right tends to regard women as inferior to men.

Nevertheless, although these views on gender relations might partly explain why women are more reluctant to embrace the populist radical-right, it does not tell us much about why men are its most ardent supporters (Ralph-Morrow 2020: 3). Indeed, as research on voting patterns for far-right parties in Europe indicates, the radical-right electorate fits a clear gender-specific profile, with women "significantly underrepresented among radical-right voters compared with men" (Coffe 2018: 2).This gender-gap has been found in Europe at large (Coffe 2018: 2). So, what brings so many men, in particular, to vote for the radical-right, as opposed to women?

In a brief literature review on the matter, Spierings and Zaslove (2017) suggests two popular explanations: first, the vote for the right is due to men's socio-economic position, and – related to that – secondly, the vote for the right is due to anti-immigration and law and order attitudes. These explanations, economic and ideological, suggest that men are overrepresented

[2] I write the Other with capital O to underline that I talk about a process of exclusion that makes inclusion impossible.

in blue collar industry jobs, in which they suffer disproportionately from an increasingly globalized economy where they not only have to compete with immigrants, but that also produces a global change in which national or regional identity is lost. However, the authors maintain that these explanations cannot fully explain the gender differences in right-wing voting patterns

Indeed, other authors argue that this so-called "deprivation thesis", that postulates that support for radical-right populism should be explained by economic factors such as changes in occupational structure, does not explain the gender-gap sufficiently (Ralph-Morrow 2020: 3). As Ralph-Morrow argues, both men and women are subjected to economic deprivations (2020: 3). There is a lot of research that challenges the "deprivation thesis" and underlines that socio-economic characteristics on their own are not sufficient to understand the gender-gap in radical-right voting patterns (Immerzeel *et al.* 2015; Mudde 2007).This means that other factors should be examined. In that vein, Norris and Inglehart (2016) argue that it is more fruitful to look at a conservative cultural backlash against increasing progressive values, rather than economic frustrations, if we want to explain support for the radical-right.

Recently a growing number of research has connected men and masculinity to these attitudes of gender conservatism in far-right discourse. Michael Kimmel's work on "angry white men", for instance, has explored the ways in which Trump-supporters use masculinity to problematize the Other, in order to compensate for their feeling of humiliation, what Kimmel names their sense of "aggrieved entitlement" (Kimmel 2013: 17). Kimmel argues that many men have a sense of entitlement to power – "that sense that although I may not be in power now, I deserve to be, and if I am not, something is definitely wrong" – that is coming to an end, throwing many men into an abyss of frustration and anger. Another central voice in these debates is Pankaj Mishra, who described our age as the "age of anger". Resentment is the defining feature of today's word, Mishra argues, caused by an "intense mix of envy and sense of humiliation and powerlessness" and experienced mostly by men who feel threatened by women and minorities (Mishra 2017: 14). In a similar vein, political theorist Wendy Brown contends that a sense of "aggrieved power", *i.e.,* the feeling of "not getting what one feels one deserves" (Brown 2018: 69) leads to the current rise of authoritarianism. For Brown, economic precarity in combination with the subjective experience of a lost entitlement "to politically, socially, and economically reproduced supremacism" conjoined with "crushed political and social images of the self, the race, and the nation" are the main ingredients needed for a turn to authoritarianism (Brown 2018: 69).

Other research has identified the ways in which the radical-right capitalizes on these frustrations related to male identity. For instance, Norocel (2010) has looked at political discourses of the Swedish Democrats in which ethnically deviant Others are deemed inferior in the image of a nation governed by patriarchal structures. Somewhat differently, the term "political masculinities" is increasingly used to understand the ways in which masculinities are constructed in the political domain (Löffler, Luyt & Starck 2020). Other research has investigated how the far-right organization *English Defense League* provides a space for the display of enacting manhood and exhibits a distinct masculine discourse (Ralph-Morrow 2020). Finally, Christine Agius and her co-authors investigated the role of masculinity on climate denial in different contexts (Agius, Bergman & Kinnvall 2020).

This thesis aims to contribute to this growing body of research on masculinity in right-wing populism. As already mentioned, the presence of men is one of the most salient features of the radical-right, and yet, not much is known about the role of men *as men* in creating this support (Ralph-Morrow 2020; Kimmel 1993). Economic explanations are not enough to understand why this is the case, thus I will follow the direction of the research discussed above and investigate the role of masculinity in support for the radical-right. In the following chapters I will first discuss the literature on men and masculinity and the link with right-wing populism before elaborating on the Portuguese case.

1.2. Masculinity, power and authoritarianism

So, what is masculinity? In this section, I will largely follow sociologist and longtime masculinities scholar Raewyn Connell's insights on what constitutes masculinity. In her book *Masculinities,* originally published in 1995, Connell argues that there is not one dominant type of masculinity, but that one should think of masculinities in the plural, each associated with different positions of power. Connell writes "masculinity (…) is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture" (Connell 2005: 71). Connell aims to make clear that masculinities are closely associated with relations of power, domination and subordination, and as a power practice, masculinity fuses and interacts with other aspects of social life, such as race, class, nationality, and location (Connell 2005: 75).

However, although masculinities are subject to historical and cultural changes, there is in Connell's view one aspect of masculinity and power that is very central and relatively stable and that is "the global dominance of men over women" (Connell 1987: 183).This power

configuration is also known as the patriarchy (Connell 1987: 74). As a power structure, however, the patriarchy needs to be legitimized and maintained in order to survive. Echoing Foucault, Connell seems to think that where there is power, there is also resistance to it (Demetriou 2001: 342).

The strategy by which the patriarchy as a power structure continues to exist is in part determined by what Connell calls "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 2005: 77). Masculinity as a configuration of gender practices can take different shapes, but these practices all relate to hegemonic masculinity as a central point of reference. In other words, "doing masculinity" is the way in which men (and women) relate to hegemonic masculinity in their own gender practices (Budde 2012: 70).The term hegemonic alludes to the fact that men's power is omnipresent, in Sofia Aboim's words, as "a consistent set of societal patterns" but also "individually embodied in complex and flexible ways" (Aboim 2010: 38). Hegemonic masculinity does not only allude to men's domination over women, but also creates hierarchies between masculinities themselves, *i.e.*, relations of subordination within the same gender (Connell 2005: 76). Thus, hegemonic masculinity should be understood as hegemony over women as well as the hegemony of some men over other men (Demetriou 2001: 41). As such, it reproduces and grants legitimacy to patriarchal relations. Of course, hegemonic masculinity is historical, in the sense that the dominance of one hegemonic type of masculinity can be challenged and replaced by a new hegemonic type of doing masculinity (Connell 2005: 77).

It is not difficult to see the similarities between patriarchy as a power structure and the authoritarian agenda of the populist radical-right. Because hegemonic masculinity is so closely defined with power, the political field can provide the context in which these power struggles take place (Loffler 2020: 12; Greig 2019). In this political field, the populist radical-right exhibits a strong commitment to nativism that relies to large extent on the mainstreaming of a 'national' common sense (Mudde 2007). In doing so, they rely on using specific narratives of the nation, the role of men in the nation, and other conceptual metaphors that picture men as a group in decline (Greig 2019: 50). Therefore, we can use Connell's conception of hegemonic masculinity as a way to think through the operations of patriarchal authority of right-wing populist parties. One can think for example of the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a function that ascribes prescriptive norms of dominant gendered behavior to groups of people and individuals. Even though hegemonic ways of doing gender are constructed ideals, they can still form a moral battlefield and point out perceptions of appropriateness for doing gender. Thus, when looking at hegemonic masculinity in right-wing populism, one can for example

examine masculinity as a power practice that attempts to reinstall a hegemonic (traditional) version of manhood (Greig 2019: 27).

For Connell, this power practice happens by means of a hegemonic struggle, in the Gramscian sense, which is not a direct violent attack on non-hegemonic masculinities or women, but a more subtle symbolic attempt to normalize and mainstream an ethnonationalist common sense by means of marginalizing and appropriating non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell 2005: 77-83). Analyzing the use of narratives, discourse and political uses of masculinity thus requires an understanding of these discursive strategies of hegemonic masculinity (Greig 2019: 27). One of these attempts to mainstream ethnonationalism common sense I want to explore here is the use of what is, in fact, a form of masculinity nostalgia in populist radical-right discourse. Let me briefly elaborate on this topic in another section.

1.3. Masculinity nostalgia

In the previous section I wrote that the populist radical-right has a shared commitment to ethnonationalism, and this ambition is often realized by constituting an out-group on the basis of a dichotomy construction ('us' versus 'them'). This commitment to ethnonationalism is often depicted in shared myths about the national past (Manucci 2020; Firmonasari 2020; Agius, Rosamond & Kinnvall 2020). In this imaginary past, the nation is seen as a stable and secure place, which is now supposedly under threat (Manucci 2020: 55). This kind of nostalgia for a shared national past not only refers to the 'good old times' when the country was safe and pure, and everything was just fine, but also functions as a narrative for the present: it identifies those scapegoats who disturbed the continuation of this 'good old times' and are seen as a threat (Agius *et al.* 2020). It is important to mention that this kind of nostalgia involves not simply looking back in time, rather, it involves an idealization of history, in which some aspects of a nation's past are conveniently forgotten and other aspects are strategically celebrated (Manucci 2020: 56).

This construction of a nation's (masculine) past alludes to what Joane Nagel explored in her article on manhood and nationhood, which showed the different ways in which nationalist politics involves accomplishing masculinity (Nagel 1998: 251). Because nationhood and masculinity are so strongly intertwined, these myths about a national past also contain strong traditional norms on gender relations, which some researchers have identified as a form of "masculinity nostalgia" (Mackenzie & Foster 2017: 208). This nostalgia is defined as "both the *yearning* for an idealized, secure, and peaceful time in which gender roles were presumed to

have been clear and uncontested, and a *quest* to reclaim patriarchal power and authority" (Mackenzie & Foster 2017: 208). Populist political communication often refers to this quest to reclaim patriarchal power and authority by slogans such as "make America great again" or to "take back control".

If things were better in the past, that suggests that the present is problematic. Indeed, many studies have identified a link between right-wing populism, uses of nostalgia and a widespread perception of crisis and insecurity (Agius *et al.* 2020: 435). Christine Agius and her colleagues relate this perception of crisis with late-modernity and use the concept of ontological insecurity, which refers to the consequent attempts to deal with "anxieties and dangers, where identity and autonomy are always in question" (Laing 1960: 39). The authors argue that those perceptions of ontological insecurity bring individuals and groups to search for stable anchors, which can help to alleviate those perceptions of ontological insecurity (Agius *et al*. 2020: 435). Furthermore, the authors argue that this search for stability and safety is increasingly exploited by right-wing populist that strategically use symbolic and mythical narratives that glorify a nation's past and are meant to alleviate those perceptions of insecurity and anxieties related to late modernity (Agius *et al*. 2020: 436).

One could argue that the radical-right appeals to men in particular because they exploit feelings of insecurity and anxiety and combine this with a nostalgia for safe times with traditional gender norms. After all, the populist radical-right often promotes a narrative of today's world in crisis with 'threatening' cultural shifts such as gender equality or multiculturalism. This is especially relevant for my inquiry into the role of masculinity in right-wing populist parties, since those parties are often said to be appealing to those who are "left behind" by contemporary society, and supposedly suffer from these shifting cultural shifts such as gender equality or multiculturalism (Gidron & Hall 2017: 5).

Against this background, the attempt to reclaim patriarchal power could also be seen as a quest for recognition for perceived injustices. In that way, one could think that the populist radical-right could offer a space for men in which they can – just like in the past – be recognized again as dominant, and, as such, the political project of the radical-right can be seen as a project of social recognition for male dominance. That being said, I am particularly interested in how ideals of hegemonic masculinity are related to this social (mis)recognition in the struggle of male dominance in radical-right discourse. Let me thus elaborate on the concept of recognition in the following section.

1.4. The radical-right's struggle for male hegemony

The concept of recognition I use here is borrowed from debates in political philosophy, most notably the work of Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser. In the previous section I wrote that one could see the attempt to reclaim patriarchal power as a political project of social recognition for male dominance. Drawing on work from Fraser and Honneth, I think that this quest can be understood as a situation of (perceived) social misrecognition. For Honneth, misrecognition is the cause of inequality. Honneth distinguishes between three forms of recognition: love, respect and esteem (Fraser & Honneth 2003: 4). For my inquiry into right-wing populism and masculinity, I think respect is the most important form of recognition, as the extreme-right often feels disrespected. For Honneth, respect alludes to a form of recognition that individuals are rational beings, capable of taking responsibility, and therefore worthy of moral consideration and entitled to individual rights. Let me point out that Honneth is primarily interested in "lived experiences of denigration and disrespect" (Anderson 2011: 20) but also points out that institutional features structure these lived experiences of (mis)recognition (Honneth 2012: 16). As such, Honneth focuses on the moral experiences of individuals when their (moral) expectations of respect are violated by institutions and individuals, resulting in what Honneth calls a "moral injury".

For Honneth, people experience moral injury when the "fundamental aspects" of their identity formation is challenged (Honneth 2007: 70). As an example, Honneth looks at participation in social protests, and argues that individuals do not participate in this protest on moral grounds but as a response to moral injury. In other words, they feel disrespected and not recognized as moral beings (Honneth 2007: 70). However, Honneth also argues that experiences of moral injury are ambivalent, in the sense that they do not give any direction "that would stipulate in what ways one should struggle against the experience of disrespect" (Honneth 2007: 77). Something more is needed for those who feel disrespected, that enables them to articulate their experiences in a democratic way, to prevent them from living it out in violence, a topic of discussion that is not in the scope of this thesis.

More explicitly than Honneth, Fraser connects recognition to social status of groups and individuals in relation to society. Consequently, Fraser thinks misrecognition is a form of social subordination. In other words, when one is not on equal footing with the other, then that indicates misrecognition and thus social subordination, as opposed to a situation in which people are seen as peers (Fraser 2001: 24). Thus, one could say that recognition is closely associated with power. We can easily connect Honneth's and Fraser's conception of recognition

with Connell's insights on hegemonic masculinity, which is also closely connected to power relations between genders, in interplay with other social categorizations such as race, age, or social class. Doing appropriate forms of gender, after all, depends on what is socially recognized as such. Thus, the experience of "moral injury" Honneth writes about could be closely connected to the normative prescriptions of hegemonic masculinity, *i.e.*, the normative ideals on how to enact and communicate one is a 'real man'. If one does not feel recognized as a 'real man' *i.e.*, one's identified formation is being challenged, one could expect that experiences of moral injury might come into play. Especially when recognition from equals is being denied, one can experience social subordination, and it is in this sense that I think being recognized as a 'real man' depends on who recognizes the person in question as such, and thus, on one's own social status as well as that of the other.

Using Fraser and Honneth's ideas on social recognition, and Connell's insights on hegemonic masculinity, and the literature on the populist far-right I discussed so far, I expect that the struggle for hegemony of male dominance does not involve an explicit quest for recognition of a traditional form of patriarchy. Instead, legitimacy is gained from attacking the masculinity of Others, allowing right-wing populist parties to foster a conservative political order. In light of this, my question is: how is this new space for recognition of hegemonic masculinity exactly created? This is the central question of my research, which I will apply to the Portuguese case. Before discussing this question in more details and expanding on my methods and methodology, I will thus first elaborate on my case study in the following section.

CHAPTER 2

Case study and methodology

2.1. The Portuguese case

Until 2018 Portugal was considered as an exception when it comes to the success of radical-right populist parties. This immunity, however, came to an end in 2019, with the rise of the far-right party *Chega* (Fernandes & Magalhães 2020: 1038). In that year, for the first time since the end of the dictatorship in 1974, a far-right populist party gained parliamentary representation. Even though *Chega* only received 1,3 % of the vote, a radical-right party never had such a high score in a national election in Portugal (Fernandes & Magalhães 2020: 1038) Opinion polls show that this support has been on the rise since then (Mendes 2021). Currently, Portugal is an edge case compared to the rest of Europe, rather than an exception (Dennison & Mendes 2020: 1). Despite its novelty, *Chega* has already been placed among the European right-wing populist movement (Rooduijn *et al.* 2019). Indeed, *Chega* exhibits many familiarities with other radical-right parties in Europe, with core campaign issues such as national sovereignty, law and order agenda, criticism of the elite, and its focus on the stigmatizing of the Roma community and Black Africans. However, compared to other European countries, the political salience of immigration is low in Portugal (Carvalho & Duarte 2020), and even though *Chega*'s leader André Ventura clearly sees Islam as a threat, his preferred targets are the Roma community (*Ciganos*) who are systematically subject to the party's exclusionary rhetoric (Biscaia & Salgado 2022).

However, because Portugal was under authoritarian rule until 1974, the public expression of explicit prejudice nowadays is still stigmatized, and the authoritarian regime of the past is still overtly rejected (Manuci 2020: 46). That does not mean that *Chega* has no material to work with. According to Mendes and Dennison (2020: 752), one important explanation for the party's sudden rise lies in the lack of offer on the right-wing supply side. Thus, *Chega* satisfied a certain demand for a strong political alternative on the right that until recently was missing.

As aforementioned, following years of dictatorship, *Chega* cannot explicitly step back into an overtly authoritarian discourse, since then they may risk stigmatization by potential sympathizers and miss out on voters (Biscaia & Salgado 2022: 236). Nonetheless there might be a small number of voters who are actually nostalgic for the old dictatorship and are thus potentially more tolerant of an explicit authoritarian discourse. In order to balance between the more extreme voters and the moderate ones, *Chega* needs to maintain a conceptual division

between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in order to feed into feelings of relative deprivation, but at the same time not constantly step back into explicit illiberal discourse (Biscaia & Salgado 2022: 236). This represents a particular challenge for *Chega*’s effort to mainstream its ethnonationalism. It requires that they express “exclusionary ideas in coded language” that signal to “more than one audience at once and shifting blame to convenient scapegoats” (Biscaia & Salgado 2022: 236). Indeed, research on populist strategies has shown that populist have to find a way to balance between vagueness and intelligibility. This can be achieved by, for instance, a combination between a provocative style with vagueness (Kramer 2017: 1300). In other works, in order to address different audiences at once, *Chega* may resort to strategic ambiguity, to address different audiences at once.

One prominent way that *Chega’*s communicates its discourse is through Twitter, YouTube and other social media outlets. During the presidential elections, André Ventura’s media savviness clearly distinguished him from his opponent and current president Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, perceived as “unbeatable” but not too active on any social media network (Biscaia & Salgado 2022: 237). Conform to the populist logic of the aforementioned “us-them” dichotomy, *Chega* revolts, at least rhetorically, against ‘the elite’ on these social media outlets. In particular Ventura’s hostility against President Rebelo de Sousa and his so-called political correctness is a case in point (Biscaia & Salgado 2022: 240). Other populist claims that Ventura often addresses is that he will only be president for the so-called ‘Good Portuguese’ which does not, in Ventura’s vision, include ‘criminals’ or people living on welfare benefits (Mendes 2021). Even though *Chega* does not explicitly exclude women from the group of ‘Good Portuguese’, *Chega*’s manifest does mention, like many other right-wing populist parties in Europe, their opposition against so-called ‘gender ideology’, on which I will expand more below. Note that in one party document, ‘gender ideology’ is even described as the “dictatorship of gender ideology” (*Chega*, Political Program 2019).

Since, Ventura, as the party’s main founder, is such a central figure in defining its program, let me also briefly put him into context. After obtaining a Law Degree from the Nova University of Lisbon, Ventura finished a Doctorate in Law at the University College of Cork, Ireland, in 2013 (Marchi 2020: 24) His thesis critiqued penal populism and the stigmatization of minorities (Público 2019). He returned to Portugal to work in a Law society and as a lecturer in two different universities in Lisbon (Marchi 2020: 24). His steppingstone to the public realm however was not his academic career, but his appearance as a columnist and commentator in different newspapers and television channels, namely the tabloid television *Correio de Manhã TV,* expanding on topics like politics and football (Marchi 2020: 25). In 2015 Ventura

announced his ambition to become the president of the municipality of Sintra representing the center-right party *Partido Social Democrata*, PSD (Marchi 2020: 27). After unsuccessfully trying to influence the PSD agenda to a more right-wing position, even if elected in 2017 as alderman in the municipality of Loures, he left the party, and founded the more radical *Chega* 2019 (Biscara & Salgado 2022: 236). His successful academic background and activities in different media would not exactly place him among the "losers of globalization", as Biscaia and Salgado aptly note (2020: 247), but would actually place him among the elite that most populist leaders, including Ventura himself, are so skeptical of.

That being said, let me point out other characteristics of *Chega* that can be seen as typical for right-wing populist. Even though Portuguese society has constitutional provisions and official legal regulations that are explicitly anti-racist, and even if after the revolution in 1974 explicit racism became anathema in the midst of an overall equalitarian political culture, racism still is a systemic force (Vala, Brito & Lopes 2015), a factor that is explicitly denied and framed as unpatriotic by *Chega*. Moreover, recently Cancela and Magalhães (2022) showed that almost two in three of *Chega*'s voters are men, indicating a "modern gender gap" in *Chega*'s electorate, a gap that until recently did not exist in Portugal. In other words, until the 2022 elections, men and women did not vote systematically different.

All in all, *Chega* exhibits many common characteristics compared to other right-wing populist parties in Europe (Mudde 2007: 92). A dichotomy between 'the pure' people and corrupt elites, strong elements of nativism and authoritarianism, a strong emphasis on law and order, stigmatization, of minorities like the Roma community, Black Africans and Muslims, a revolt against 'gender ideology' and elements of racist nationalism.

Of course, the rise of *Chega* has to be seen in a specific historical context. The fact that during most of the twentieth century, Portugal was under an authoritarian regime, as well as a major colonial power since the fifteenth century, provides a rich context to study the potential enactments of masculinity nostalgia in *Chega*'s political discourse. However, like I wrote above, *Chega* faces a particular challenge in this aspect, since they cannot explicitly allude too much to this authoritarian and imperialist past, and as a consequence, not explicitly re-use traditional models of patriarchy anymore. So how does *Chega* attempt to receive social recognition for male dominance without being explicitly patriarchal or authoritarian?

2.2. Methodology

Chega's leader Ventura's is a vivid user of social media, and this clearly illustrates his and the party's investment in the digital realm as a way to reach voters and communicate ideas to the larger public (Biscaia & Salgado 2022: 236). At the same time, *Chega* cannot simply ignore mainstream media outlets. Indeed, the link between populism, mainstream media, and social media seems to have a somewhat complicated relationship that sparked a lot of debate in recent years. After the election of Donald Trump, commentators argued that the use of social media, especially Twitter, was decisive for the election results (Francia 2018: 440).

More research has shown that Twitter has become an important medium through which right-wing politicians can speak directly to their electorate and develop a more "personal" relationship with them (Kasmani 2019: 131). Research has also shown that Twitter emerged as a particularly suitable channel for appealing to 'the people' that is so typical of populist parties (Gerbaudo 2018: 745). By bypassing established media outlets, Twitter can pave a way for politicians to interact with voters directly and create more visibility on their own terms. In Gerbaudo's terms, social media in general has offered a suitable way for populist parties to "represent the unrepresented" and give a "voice to the voiceless" (Gerbaudo 2018: 76). Thus, given the specific salience of Twitter for right-wing political communication, it provides a suitable context to analyze the role of masculinity in *Chega*'s appeal to their electorate.

Given *Chega*'s leader's media savviness, I will investigate *Chega*'s quest for recognition of traditional male dominance by means of a discourse analysis on the party's Twitter account (@PartidoChega). This account was created on the 4th of December of 2018 (in fact, even before the formal foundation of the party), and has nowadays more than 25000 followers. In my analysis, I look at a sample from the 1st of June 2021 until the 1st of June 2022. This timeframe is chosen because it generated a solid body of 399 tweets to analyze. Shorter periods did not generate enough tweets, and a longer period generates too much data to analyze, which is outside the scope of this thesis.

Concerning the sample; retweets to the *Chega*-account from other accounts were not included, since I am primarily interested in the original tweets. In addition, in order to contextualize these tweets, I will also analyze *Chega*'s electoral programs from 2019, 2021 and 2022. Note that I will focus primarily on the tweets from the account @PartidoChega. The electoral programs from *Chega* are meant to contextualize the Tweets under analysis in a broader context. In addition, in order to further contextualize the tweets in the analysis, I will

refer to news articles from *Observador* and *Público*, where one can find *Chega*'s members' published opinions, but these articles are not subjected to a systematic discourse analysis.

This contextualization of the tweets helps me to emphasize the way in which populist actors have to navigate in what political scientist Chadwick has called "hybrid media systems" (2013: 4). This term alludes to the fact that political communication does not occur in an isolated universe but happens in a complex and increasingly so-called "hybrid" media system in which old and new media continuously interact with each other. Because newer media are getting more and more popular and are nowadays almost mainstream (Chadwick 2013: 4) the interconnection between Twitter as a non-mediated media source, and other news media, that are controlled by organizations and gatekeepers, has to be considered as an important factor to provide the necessary contextualization of the Twitter analysis.

That being said, let me describe how I will do the discourse analysis. There are a lot of approaches and ways to look at discourses, but they all share a focus on the use of ordinary language, and its connection with the reproduction of power and maintenance of social inequality (van Dijk 2001: 352). As discourse scholar van Dijk (1993) argues, looking at power in a discourse means looking at the way in which discourses reproduce and challenge dominance, where dominance is defined as "the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups (…) that result in social inequality"(van Dijk 1993: 250). Discourse analysis should reveal the different modes in which these power relations operate, for instance by means of support, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation or concealment of power relations (van Dijk 1993: 250). In other words, discourse analysis fits very well with my indented research question, which centers on the way through which hegemonic male dominance is being used and reproduced to maintain a patriarchal society.

That being said, let me emphasize that political communication on Twitter and their discourses is not really a straightforward exercise. Again, in the words of van Dijk, discourses work "indirectly, often concealing both their origins and their effects", and thus does not involve simply looking at what is being said, as ideologies "seldom express themselves directly in text and talk" (van Dijk 1995: 33). This means that I am dealing with ambiguity, which requires looking critically at processes of argumentation in order to reveal implications on what is really being said, even though it is not explicitly stated, thus looking at the explicit and implicit ways in which words, culture and ideology may be interconnected (Wodak & Meyer 2009).

In my content analysis of *Chega* I first read all the tweets (N=399) and party programs (N=3) as described above. From the total sample of tweets, I selected 74 tweets which contained

one of the four themes which follow from the literature review, and will be described in the next section. In a second round, I looked closer at the tweets I selected, and deconstructed the discourse that is at stake in the given theme.

1.3. Themes

In this section, I will describe the themes that I look at in the data under analysis. These themes follow from chapter 1. The topics discussed in the first chapter are here instrumentalized in a way that underlines analytical dimensions of populism, authoritarianism, and struggles for male hegemony.

Populism's main feature, as I defined it in the literature review following Mudde, is that it consists of a "thin centered ideology" that separates 'the people' from 'the elite'. This main antagonism requires populist leaders to demarcate who is part of 'the people' and who is not. Indeed, just like other right-wing parties in Europe, previous Portuguese far-right leaders have tried to distinguish 'the people' from Others by capitalizing on islamophobia as a political issue, in order to construct a "us-them dichotomy" (Biscaia & Salgado 2022: 237). Because this in-out group demarcation is so vital for *Chega's* nativist struggle, I will look at *Othering* as a first theme in my first level content analysis. By learning who is included and who is excluded I hope to learn more about who exactly can be part of the so-called 'Good Portuguese' and how this ideal type is constructed in gendered terms, using Connell's insights on masculinity I discussed so far. Thus, how does *Chega* distinguish the 'Good Portuguese' from Others who are not part of this in-group and what does this mean for the masculinity of those Others?

A second theme will be *Attacks on the elite.* Hostility towards the elite is very prevalent in most right-wing discourse. Undermining or appropriating democratic institutions through constitutional changes challenges the established political elite. Moreover, the charismatic leader is often seen as a core feature of populist parties (Taggart 2000), and this cult of personality often reveals explicit masculine attributes. This image of the "strongman" ruler contributes to the image of politics as a masculine field (Löffler, Luyt & Starck 2020). Therefore, in this theme, I aim to look at the combination of political leadership and attacking the elite, to see in what ways to work together. This can illuminate in what ways legitimacy for attacking the elite is gained, and how a gendered form of power is contributing to this process in the background. Given Ventura's own elitist background and his centrality in the party, I am interested in how Ventura constructs his own populist masculine performance. How does

Ventura legitimate his attacks on the elite and what does this mean for his own (gendered) populist leadership?

In a third dimension, I will look at instances of *Memory politics*. Because my research questions centers around the way in which *Chega* provides a space in which men can *again* be recognized as dominant, looking at *Chega'*s uses of Portuguese history becomes imperative. In the literature review I wrote that one could say that far-right populist exploit a certain national nostalgia for safe times where everything was fine, and the country was safe. However, these nostalgias regarding the mythology of the past are linked to fantasies of a secure, 'traditional' past that in many ways, never really existed. But that does not mean that nostalgia cannot be used to mainstream ethnonationalism. In this theme, I connect memory politics to the so-called "masculinity nostalgia" I discussed in the literature review. This alludes to a combination between the yearning for a safe place and time with conservative gender roles and the quest to reclaim patriarchal power.

In the last theme I will look at comments on so-called '*Gender ideology*'. Populism as a thin centered ideology saves room for other complementary ideologies. Let me first point out that the term 'gender ideology' is indeed, like many authors suggested, an empty signifier (Mauer & Sauer 2017; Kovats & Poim 2015) In other words, the term itself does not have any content, it does not refer to anything. However, that does not mean that it cannot be used. For the far-right it functions as a powerful discursive tool to mobilize against LGBTQ rights, women's right, reproductive rights, gender equality, sex and gender education in schools, or even gender studies itself (Paternotte & Kuhar 2018: 9). Unlike the previous themes, in which I look at gender by implication, in this theme, gender is explicitly there. I am interested in comments on 'gender ideology' because researchers have argued that right-wing populism has to a large extent contributed to the success of anti-gender campaigns, and anti-gender mobilizations have resonated well with right-wing populisms, albeit in different ways. Looking at *Chega*'s stances on 'gender ideology' will shed light on how populism, as a so-called "thin centered ideology" is complemented with other ideologies.

These four dimensions can show us how social recognition for mainstreaming male dominance is gained. In the first two themes, this happens by looking at the gendered implications of two important right-wing populist features: processes of Othering, and hostility against the elite. The question here is how legitimacy is gained at the expense of the masculinity of Others, be it the elite or external 'strangers'. The third theme shows us how the radical-right uses history to mainstream it's ethnonationalist project, given the specific Portuguese context, where the fourth theme adds up to the previous ones, but now sheds explicit light on *Chega'*s

explicit attacks on gender, whereas the former only looked at gender by implication. In this way, my themes can show us how *Chega* paves the way for the installment of a conservative political order.

CHAPTER 3

Analysis

3.1. Othering

The in-out group demarcation is often implied in moral discourses around the so-called 'Good Portuguese'. This means that it is not always explicitly stated who the Others are. However, we can make the Others visible by deconstructing who is in-group and deduce by means of implication who is not part of this in-group. The main hashtag and current party motto "Portugal for the Portuguese" (@PartidoChega 2022) and multiple one-sentence tweets "God, Fatherland, Family, Work" (@PartidoChega 2021) appeal strongly to nationalist sentiments and already gives a hint who the 'Good Portuguese' are.

The 'Good Portuguese' are categorized by *Chega* as native Portuguese people who are 'typically' hardworking taxpayers and contribute to the prosperity of the country in economic and moral terms. Furthermore, they are not part and, in fact, at odds with the political elites of the country, who are represented as compromising the faith of the 'Good Portuguese'. Further analysis of the tweets reveals the 'Good Portuguese' are also typically part of a nuclear family, which *Chega* envisions as the main cornerstone of Portuguese society. Tweets about the importance of the nuclear family occur frequently: 19 % of the tweets stress the importance of the family, sometimes in combination with other topics. I include a few below:

> *André Ventura: "Why is CHEGA radical? Why defend life imprisonment for murderers and rapists? Why defend the reduction of the number of deputies? Why defend less taxes for families? Why do we want a different justice?"* (@PartidoChega 2022).

> *"If we don't fight against the power of the same families and against the corruption of the State that impoverishes us, what sense do ceremonies on the 5th of October make? What Republic are we celebrating?"* (@PartidoChega 2021).

> *"Children are our greatest gift. It is our duty to ensure that they grow up in a peaceful and happy family environment, free from ideologies that jeopardize their development and well-being. They are our future"!* (@PartidoChega 2021).

Thus, for *Chega,* the Portuguese 'native' population is defined in a heteronormative and hierarchical fashion, with the nuclear family, consisting of a man, a woman and some children as the most important unit. This is not only prevalent in tweets about the family, but also occurs explicitly in *Chega'*s political program from 2021:

> *Natural family. CHEGA respects other different models of sharing a common life, but considers the natural family, based on the intimate relationship between a woman and a man, a*

> *psycho-sociological and socio-economic reality prior to the State, historically stable and humanly irreplaceable. It conveys life and a whole set of affective, emotional and behavioral balances, as well as knowledge, traditions and heritage that sustain the dignity and prosperity of individuals and peoples*. (Political Program *Chega* 2021).

In short, *Chega*'s definition of the Portuguese people clearly rest on heteronormative bonds of citizenry, understood as 'natural'. Let me briefly explain what I mean with heteronormative. The term heteronormativity is defined as a normative system that values heterosexuality as the 'natural' and normative sexual orientation. Every sexual orientation that deviates from that norm is devaluated and seen as inferior (Warner 1991). Needless to say, perhaps, it operates within a patriarchal framework where men and females are seen as complementary and appropriate for the purpose of procreation (Warner 1991).

That being said, in the case of *Chega,* people who do not embody the nuclear family model are not directly pushed outside the group of native Portuguese, since it is claimed that "*Chega* respects other different models of sharing a common life", as the political program states, but are at least seen as Other and thereby deemed 'unnatural' and inferior. Indeed, in the process of constructing a nation, that is, in making up "an imagined political community" which is imagined as "both inherently limited and sovereign", Others are needed to demarcate the imagined political community (Anderson 1991: 6). In this sense, we can define a process of othering as a process of "differentiation and demarcation by which the line is drawn between 'us' and 'them' " (Lister 2004: 1010). This process of othering implies also that the Other is reduced and essentialized to a few negative characteristics (Jensen 2011: 65).

Clearly, the nuclear family as the main institution represents the national identity of 'us' and figures as a metaphor that justifies subordination of women to men, and children to adults, which is seen as a "natural fact" (McClinktock 1993: 64). Despite the fact that people who live outside the 'natural' family are not explicitly attacked by *Chega*, they are framed as 'them' and are thus secondary citizens by implication. Now it becomes clear that *Chega'*s nationalism, like so many other right-wing populist movements, intends to establish a category of the 'pure people' that clearly needs the construction of external Others who are, in *Chega*'s vision, everybody who attacks the well-being of the 'Good Portuguese'. Frequent targets are the socialists, António Costa, the extreme-left and the Roma Community, who, in *Chega*'s view, only take advantage of the hardworking Portuguese and have, according to *Chega*, an unemployment problem within *their* community (Dias 2021).

Again, let me point out that *Chega*'s hegemonic model of the native population strongly relies on heteronormativity, which is exemplified by the glorification of the nuclear family. Let me however also point out that heteronormativity can easily co-exist with tolerance of

non-hetero citizens, because this tolerance might have an utilitarian value. Let me briefly explain. Because heteronormativity makes us assume that everybody is straight per definition, it means that non-straight people either keep on pretending they are straight, thus keeping the hetero norm intact, or they can choose to come out as non-straight, and thus explicitly declare their non-normativity, making themselves the "stranger", culturally excluded from the nation (Bauman 1991: 66). In other words, as long as non-straight people do not challenge the overall heteronormative (and by extension the heteronationalist) project, they are tolerated within the nation. In this way, heteronationalism relies on homophobia to enforce the nation's hegemonic masculine image (Slootmaeckers 2019: 257). In the case of *Chega*, latent homophobia is instrumentalized to reinforce the idea of the traditional family as the cornerstone of the native population.

Another way to think about the importance of the family, hegemonic masculinity, and the imagination of the nation, is to turn back to the work of Connell. Based on Connell's insights, I think this glorification could also be seen as a response to an attack on the patriarchal gender order, which necessitates an explicit kind of masculinity politics. Let me again briefly explain what I mean.

Connell writes that normally "heterosexual men socially selected for hegemonic masculinity run the corporations and the state" (Connell 1995: 212). This situation represents the collective project of hegemonic masculinity, and the routine maintenance of these institutions does the job of maintaining patriarchy as the "normal" situation, according to Connell. However, when a crisis in the gender order emerges, for instance by means of the emancipation of women or minorities, hegemonic masculinity is likely to be thematized as a response (Connell 1995: 212). This seems to be what is happening in *Chega*'s appeal to the nuclear family: as the invisible, normal everyday dominance of a particular kind of masculinity is being challenged, a masculinity lobby arises as an explicit defense of hegemonic masculinity. At the same time, this masculinity politics from *Chega* departs from a mere reactionary framework. In this framework, we could argue with Connell that *Chega's* masculinity politics is a process of making gendered power through the glorification of the nuclear family (Connell 1995: 205). The differences within the native group of Portuguese people are strategically erased, which is then instrumentalized for attacking the political elite.

To conclude, in *Chega*'s discourse, it is not always explicitly states who the Others are. However, what is clear is that the nuclear family represents the 'Good Portuguese' and this implies that *Chega's* ethnonationliast project relies to a large extent on the implicit defense of heteronormativity. *Chega*'s latent homophobia reinforces this defence. With Connell, we can

understand the glorification of the nuclear family as a response to an alleged attack to the patriarchal gender order, which necessitates a masculinity politics that attempts to restore a sense of male entitlement that *Chega* thinks it under attack.

Let me thus now turn to another hot topic in *Chega'*s discourse, attacking the elites.

3.2. Attacking the elite

Attacks on 'the elite' is surely a hot topic in the data under analysis, where 34 % of the tweets consisted of a direct attack on the elite. The elite is most frequently understood as the current political establishment, the socialists, the extreme-left, António Costa, or candidates from the Left Bloc Party (*Bloco de Esquerda*). They are accused of many things, the most important one being corrupt and intentionally compromising the interest and well-being of the 'Good Portuguese'. This accusation allows *Chega* to position themselves as a viable alternative: a party that 'really' cares about the faith of the Portuguese people and speaks up for them. However, attacking the elite does not only happen verbally by means of blaming and shaming. *Chega* also attempts to influence current judiciary and constitutional laws. For instance, the political program of 2021 states that *Chega* promotes a "drastic reduction of all legislation" where the role of the state should be minimal but sovereign (Political Program *Chega* 2021).

The message that *Chega* communicates is that the political elite and the current opposition have to be repressed, because those parties and institutions cannot guarantee the well-being of the 'Good Portuguese', but only take advantage of them as taxpayers. André Ventura, however, frames himself as a leader of a party who, unlike his opponents, does 'genuinely' care about those taxpayers, and his populist leadership evolves around the idea that his party can save the nation from all these corrupt institutions that the elite represents and are only a hindrance for the well-being of the native population.

Let me thus elaborate on Ventura's own populist style of doing politics. Moffit and Tormey define a political style as "the repertoires of performance that are used to create political relations" (Moffit & Torney 2014: 387). In addition, the authors suggest focusing on the relationship between the populist leader and 'the people' when one looks at populist styles of doing politics. Moffit and Tormey also state that "much of populists' appeal comes from their disregard of 'appropriate' ways of acting in the political realm" (Moffit and Tormey 2014: 392). Nevertheless, according to Löffler (2020: 14), a political style also has gender dimensions, which Moffit and Tormey do not include in their definition, but which cannot be excluded since people cannot avoid doing gender, in one way or another.

In the data under analysis, it appears that Ventura present himself as a humble, law-abiding politician, indeed fighting hard for the 'Good Portuguese' and keenly defends institutions that reinforce law and order. These elements are perhaps best exemplified in an interview with *Público.* When Ventura was asked about the financial structures of one of *Chega*'s campaigns he answered the following:

> *"I have one thing very clear: I guide my life by complying with the law, even the laws that I do not agree with, and I have attacked other parties for not complying with the law. Therefore, I would never accept receiving money from outside, even if they wanted to support us. (...) I don't want to break the law by one millimeter. (...) If Le Pen wanted to support us, if Salvini wanted to support us, if Steve Bannon wanted to support us, my answer would always be the same: I comply with Portuguese law" (*Alvarez *et al.* 2020*).*

In the same interview, Ventura states that he will only be president of hardworking Portuguese people:

> *"I will be the President of all Portuguese people, whether from the left or from the right, there is no doubt about that, but I will essentially be the President of all Portuguese people who work, contribute and want to make this country a different one. I will not be the President of the Portuguese who live off the system, live on subsidies, live on corrupting the system, or live on schemes so that those who work are always supporting them. I know this isn't politically correct, but it's the truth..."* (Alvarez, *et al.* 2020).

In other words, Ventura profiles himself as an unapologetic, law-respecting politician. The definition of who is part of the 'Good Portuguese' and who is not, is explicitly made in the above quote. Later we will see that his vision of 'the people' is very similar to the way Ventura presents himself. The last sentence, "I know this isn't politically correct, but it's the truth", could be seen as a kind of justification that van Dijk has called "goal-denial" (1992: 92). To illustrate this phenomenon, van Dijk talks about a newspaper that keeps on reporting news on minority crime. The newspaper may defend those publications by claiming to publish 'the truth'. This means that the newspaper in question legitimizes spreading prejudiced opinions about minorities under the excuses of publishing 'the truth'. This goal-denial thus typically also implies a denial of responsibility which is being obscured (van Dijk 1992: 93). If we apply this to our case, then what Ventura is actually saying here is that he knows he breaks the norms of what is normally a correct way of doing politics, but he does not want take responsibility for this new transgressive way of political communication, thus intentionally breaking taboos about political communication styles. This, I think, fits very well into Moffit and Tormey's contention that populist actors deliberately break with "the 'appropriate 'ways of acting in the political realm" (Moffitt & Tormey 2014: 392).

In addition, next to this self-presentation as law-respecting, and yet unapologetic, Ventura also often uses aggressive, and sometimes even angry language to signal the authenticity of a though, aggrieved underdog. Threatening his targets in tweets:

> *"@BlocoDeEsquerda is already behind... 👋 We're going after you, @antoniocostapm!!"* (@PartidoChega 2021).

Blaming his opponents of being terrorists:

> *"@BlocoDeEsquerda: the party that defends the bandits because it has condemned terrorists in its ranks."* (@PartidoChega 2021).

Demanding apologies from his opponents:

> *André Ventura demands António Costa to apologize to the Portuguese!* (@PartidoChega 2022).

Demanding, threatening, and blaming are part of a political performance that combines a resolute kind of masculine agency with strategic blaming that reinforces the notion that he is a decisive leader who will defend 'the people' in face of external threats. This resoluteness helps him to consolidate the image of a leader that will stand up for 'authentic' Portuguese people, unlike the political elites who he is attacking, who are in his vision apathetic and corrupt.

Another prominent discursive strategy for a positive self-presentation is that Ventura presents himself explicitly as not being racist, while at the same time stigmatizing ethnic minorities. This comes to the surface for instance when Ventura called a family in a majority black neighborhood called Jamaica, 'bandits'. Shortly after, a court decided that he had to take back these words. When *Chega* eventually did, Ventura stressed that he did so only to respect to law, but that his retraction should not be seen as an apology:

> *"I only apologize because the courts forced me to do so. At no time did I consider the possibility that this could happen, but it did happen, and the other possibility was to take the party into a legal and financial abyss* (Público 2021).

Thus, Ventura justifies his retraction of this negative act towards minorities in order to emphasize his compliance with the law, while at the same time stressing that he is a decent politician who listens to the law (if he has too). A similar discursive strategy of denial is also a prevalent discourse in *Chega*'s tweets.

> *"Good morning. For the thousandth time… 1) Portugal is not a structurally racist country. 2) There are racism and racist people in Portugal. Is it really that hard to understand?* (@PartidoChega 2021).

According again to van Dijk (1992: 90), the denial of racism is part of a strategy of positive in-group participation. However, van Dijk also adds that often, in cases where norms and laws prohibit (explicit) forms of racism, prejudice and stigmatization, denial has a more explicit role (1992: 93). In Portugal, anti-racist laws are in place. However, exactly because there are explicit anti-racist policies, the most blatant forms of racism contain strong disclaimers such as: "I have nothing against blacks *but*…". According to van Dijk, this suggests that speakers who say negative things about Others are actually well aware of the fact that they are breaking norms (1992: 89). This awareness of breaking taboos has, according to van Dijk again, both individual and social dimensions (1992: 94). For our case, this means that André Ventura not only resents being called a racist himself (Figueiredo 2022).This denial also defends the in-group as a whole. That means that the sentence "I am not racist" also means: "Portugal is not a racist society". Just like in the case of the glorification of the 'natural family', this goes hand in hand with an explicit disclaimer: "*Chega* has nothing against gays *but*…", and then it follows that the 'natural' nuclear family has to have moral superiority, according to *Chega*. Thus, racist-denial, but I would say this could be applied to other denials as well, in combination with a strong disclaimer serves as a face-keeping move that legitimizes the negative assertion that follows (van Dijk 1992: 98).

Now, how does André Ventura's positive self-presentation (at the expense of negative Other evaluation) relate to masculinity? I think denial has an explicit role in this. According to van Dijk, a "social discourse of denial (…) persuasively helps to construct the dominant white consensus" (1992: 89). In the case of Ventura, I think it is this implicit consensus-creating that is at stake here. The link between the individual dimension "I am not racist" and the social dimension "we are not a racist society" underlines the idea that there is a direct identification between Ventura and the nation. That means that Ventura's denial is not just personal; he stands in for the nation as a whole. Thus, Ventura's political communication style allows him to make a paternalistic claim: he protects not only 'the Good Portuguese', but these people are his 'own' people.

To conclude, André Ventura's view on 'the people' in combination with his self-presentation as somewhat the savior of the nation adds up to the apparent contradiction between 'the people' and 'the elite'. As such, he must seeks enemies, internal and external, who can be blamed and dominated. How does this relate with masculinity? Perhaps one way to make sense of this is to return again to the work of Connell on hegemonic masculinity. Christensen and Jensen (2014) write that Connell's conception of hegemonic masculinity gains its normativity by a so-called logic of contradiction, which alludes to the distinction between

masculine and non-masculine. By highlighting his paternalistic populist style, and his direct identification with the nation, Ventura reinforces an image of himself as clearly masculine and part of the hegemonic model of the nation (the 'Good Portuguese'), as well as standing above it. In this way, although it is never explicitly stated, I think one could argue that the legitimacy of Ventura's populist masculine leadership does not need to be based on something democratic: his dominance stands in for it. In the same stroke, democratic ways of doing politics are deemed non-masculine, which fits very well with a populist style of political leadership that offers "a short-cut that bypasses philosophical disputes and institutional niceties"(Casanovan 2002: 34).

Another way to look at this is through the lens of Connell's notion of "protest masculinity". For Connell, protest masculinity is described as a collective gender practice which is typical for working class boys who experience powerlessness and, as a response to this, put together a "tense, freaky façade, making a claim to power where there are no real resources for power" (Connell 1995: 111). Protest masculinity, thus, is an active response to powerlessness, which results in a claim for a gendered position of power, a process in which there is a lot of concern with keeping face (Connell 1995: 111). Connell also notes that protest masculinity is often a dead end, despite the fact that "it is certainly an active response to the situation, and it builds on a working-class masculine ethic of solidarity. But this is a solidarity that divides the group from the rest of the working class. The loss of the economic basis of masculine authority leads to a divided consciousness – egalitarianism *and* misogyny – not to a new political direction" (Connell 1995: 117). Thus, it certainly seems that Ventura is reclaiming a gendered position of power in a context where there are no resources for power anymore, at least not on the basis of economic masculine entitlement. However, unlike Connell writes, Ventura's leadership *does* lead to a new political direction, not on the economic basis of masculine authority, but through the exploitation of cultural grievances. This leads me to the next theme, which deals with cultural aspects of populism and hegemonic masculinity.

3.3. Memory politics

Tweets about national history are another hot topic in the data under analysis, and occur 18 % of the time in the total sample. The framework about a national past is commonly used by *Chega* to consolidate the image and identity of the Portuguese nation. However, in *Chega*'s discourse, memory politics is often more explicit than the masculinity nostalgia implied in it. In this section, I explore how different hegemonic ideal types of masculinity are embedded in the memory politics of *Chega,* which, I argue, is a process of ideological normalization of

authoritarian ideas by appropriation of history. Here, I aim to put André Ventura's masculine political performance in a wider context of *Chega*'s national narratives about the past which, as we shall see, go further than a mere strengthening of emotional bonds. The following tweet could help to illustrate this:

> *André Ventura was yesterday at the tomb of D. Afonso Henriques, in Coimbra, to pay homage to the father of our great Nation!* (@PartidoChega 2022).

This tweet illustrates the construction of a national story which links people (*Chega* voters and *Chega* itself), the contemporary situation, and historical meanings together in the same scenario (Wodak & Forchtner 2014: 238). I contend that it also illustrates Ventura's identification with the nation, and the gendered underpinning of the making of the Portuguese nation. Being a 'father' of the nation, implies a 'protection' of the population, especially children, whose interests are opposed to that of "certain ethnic and racial communities" (@PartidoChega 2021), and have to be raised in a family environment free from "lgbt ideologies" (@PartidoChega 2022). I will come back to this point in the section on 'gender ideology'.

Let me point out that the link between masculinity and nationalism is widely explored and discussed by Joane Nagel's research on manhood and nationhood. Nagel writes that "perhaps *the* major way in which gender shapes politics – through men and their interest, their notions of manliness, and masculine micro and macro cultures" (Nagel 1998: 243). In Nagel's article, the link between nationhood and manhood is conceptualized as the overlapping factors between hegemonic masculinity and nationalism. Thus, to say that nationalist politics is a masculine field, is also to say that memory politics are a form of gender politics, which the political program of 2021 could illustrate:

> *"Attribution of Portuguese nationality. CHEGA assumes the duty to protect, dignify and renew Portuguese nationality against the risks of its mischaracterization in present and future generations. The attribution of Portuguese nationality to foreigners must be limited: (a) by guaranteeing the existence of affective ties of the applicants with the national community, with its collective history and identity; (b) by setting the applicants for a minimum period of ten years of permanent legal residence in the national territory; (c) the approval of candidates in a citizenship test that focuses on the history and culture of Portugal, including tests of the spoken and written national language, as well as on the institutions of the Portuguese Republic"* (*Chega*, political manifest 2021).

Here, the political program dictates the pre-conditions for receiving Portuguese nationality. This, as the quote illustrates, requires (among other things) a clear identification with the Portuguese nation and "with its collective history". Here, the maintenance of internal boundaries happens by instrumentalizing an imagined fixed national past. Later on, we will see how this imagined past of the nation is also a strategy of resistance to perceived external threats. However, it is important to point out that the collective history that is alluded above is by no means a fixed story or set in stone. That is, 'the past' is not there a priori, but has to be constructed, in retrospect. As one historical discourse analyst wrote, "the practices connected to the construction of the past require social actors' work in identity-building processes that link us to social groups such as a family, a political group or a nation" (Achugar 2017: 298). This construction happens not on a daily basis in social interactions, but also in "more institutionalized practices such as the writing of history textbooks" (Achugar 2017: 298). Political uses of the past can therefore reproduce inequality and power differences in contemporary times. A claim on the past is thus also a claim for (epistemic) power. Tweets from *Chega* about Portuguese history are in this sense, a claim for epistemic power. The following tweets could illustrate this:

> *Great deeds and great heroes must be remembered! We will not allow you to try to rewrite the history of this great nation that is Portugal PT with us* (@PartidoChega 2022).

> *We have the courage to say: it was the 25th of November 1975 that brought us democracy and freedom! Therefore, we have the right and duty to celebrate this day and to honor those who freed us from a communist dictatorship* (@PartidoChega 2022).

> *Just as we celebrate the 25th of April, celebrating the 25th of November is fundamental to democracy. The left doesn't. For Liberty, always, against fascism and communism!* (@PartidoChega 2021).

> *José Sócrates[3] is an example of the worst thing about politics and it's no use António Costa coming to say that he was tricked by his socialist comrade, trying to deceive the Portuguese in this way, because history doesn't erase, history pays!* (@PartidoChega 2021).

The first tweet, with the hashtag #nãopassarão, meaning "they shall not pass" is paradoxically a famous communist motto that alludes to (military) determination to defend a position against the fascist enemy. Originally it is an anti-fascist slogan, but in this context, it is strategically re-appropriated by *Chega.* Another instance of re-appropriation can be found in the second and the third tweet, where *Chega claims* that it was the 25th of November 1975 that

[3] José Sócrates is a former Socialist Party Prime-Minister (2005-2011) and was arrested in 2014 on corruption charges.

brought democracy to Portugal, while the revolution took place on the 25th of April 1974.[4] These instances of historical and cultural re-appropriation of history in *Chega*'s political discourse may be seen as a process of ideological normalization and a hegemonic struggle in the Gramscian sense. Let me briefly explain what I mean with this. The term hegemony alludes to that which most people consider 'common sense' which is presented as 'natural' and therefore very often unquestionable. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who did not bring the term to the table but is most often associated with the concept of cultural hegemony in political theory, understood that starting a revolution does not begin with a violent attack on the current hegemonic structures, but instead required a long-term "war of position" (Gramsci 1971: LXVI). Nowadays, in far-right political discourse, Gramsci's ideas on hegemony are referred to as *metapolitics*, which alludes to the appropriation of Gramsci's ideas by the far-right, enabling an authoritarian turn in their hegemonic struggles (Cammaerts 2022: 2). In other words, the notion of metapolitics fits well into the long-term "war of position" Gramsci envisioned, but is, in the context of far-right political discourse, strategically instrumentalized towards normalization of ethnonationalism, rather than revolutionary left-wing ideas. Furthermore, this process of hegemonization also needs the active construction of an enemy (Laclau & Mouffe 1985).

From a discourse theory perspective such as the one van Dijk maintains; the production of an ideological enemy happens through a process of othering. Positive self-presentation extends through a positive self-presentation of the nation as a whole, and in the case of *Chega,* history is effectively instrumentalized in this process. What emerges from *Chega*'s tweets above, and which we will also see below, is that Portuguese history is regarded as a strictly factual matter, and disturbing elements in it are strategically repressed, so that the historical national narrative fits well in the fight against the elite. In this narrative, a strategic glorification of Portuguese history contributes to the positive presentation of a national-self distinct from its external enemies – the Others that could potentially threaten internal stability and homogeneity. History, as a strictly factual matter and therefore not as a topic for discussion, is strategically de-topicalised, shifting the emphasis away from "the bad actions or properties" of the dominant group (van Dijk 1992: 28) – in this case, the authoritarian dictatorship is begin downplayed, and Portuguese colonial past is not spoken about at all, except in a form of denial (Mithá Ribeiro 2020).

[4] In November 1975 there was a failed military coup by far-left military groups. The upper hand by politically moderate military and civilian groups contributed to the end of the revolutionary period and the stabilization of parliamentary democracy.

The third tweet above, which claims that *Chega* is against communism and fascism reinforces the national-self versus Other distinction by means of a de-topicalization and the creation of strategic ambivalence. This ambivalence not only creates confusion for the reader but also allows *Chega* to distance themselves from intended discriminatory meanings. With "strategic ambivalence" I draw on Wodak and Forchtner (2014: 234) who define this term as the way in which different audiences are simultaneously addressed in order to convey diverging meanings in one text, thereby appealing to different audiences at the same time. For *Chega,* Portuguese history is a strict 'factual matter' that points directly to 'the truth'. This view is exemplified by Gabriel Mithá Ribeiro, *Chega'*s vice president, who expands on his opinions in the newspaper *Observador:*

> *The political and ideological discourse of Chega pointed out very incisive batteries against them: Portugal is not racist, and We are proud of our history. These are messages that pass easily and clearly to common sense because they have the attributes of truth and straightforwardness* (Mithá Ribeiro 2020).

Again, at stake is a form of racism-denial that legitimizes inciting racial hatred by alluding to 'the truth'. Moreover, those who dare to contest or criticize *Chega*, are in Mithá Ribeiro's opinion not just having a different opinion than himself, they are "abject liars" that are directly attacking the party itself, like the tweets below illustrates:

> *They who defend freedom and beat their chests to talk about the 25th of April are the first to attack the freedom of expression of CHEGA and its deputies. This has to end!* (Mithá Ribeiro 2020).

Chega's discourse on Portuguese history demonstrates that 'the past' is subject to a process of ideological normalization as well as a strategy of resistance to political opponents. *Chega* envisions Portuguese history as a factual matter as something that speaks for itself. In the meantime, discursive strategies such as de-topicalization and strategic ambivalence fuses past with the present, and fiction with reality. The discourse that is put to the foreground by *Chega* is that of a nation that was once great and powerful.

However, this past is not completely lost, it can be recreated, and reshaped by *Chega,* through the re-instalment of a strong-man leader who can protect the population against those who challenge the narrative of a great Portuguese nation, a process that is – as we have seen in the previous section – already initiated by *Chega'*s leader, André Ventura. The gendered underpinnings of this process are not always explicit, but I think the historical narrative put forward by *Chega* shows an implicit masculinist nostalgia that is perceived as being under threat. According to Agius (2020: 439), this masculinity nostalgia has the potential to produce

a gendered nationalism, *i.e.*, a nationalism that seeks "to recover the idea of a strong nation that has been weakened by feminization". Just like other right-wing parties' imaginary ideas of national sovereignty, they rely on the myth of a homogeneous nation, which is a gendered version of the homeland and the homeland culture (Agius *et al.* 2020: 440). Nationalism is mobilized by *Chega* by creating an image of a great nation, a nation "understood as a community of blood, of land, of goods and of destiny, a bringing together of men who, among themselves, have historical, cultural and linguistic links" (*Chega*, founding Political manifest, 2022). Accordingly, *Chega* glorifies the (obviously) male soldiers of the past:

> *Today is Army Day and thus, in our way of seeing the country, the day to give thanks for the many sacrifices made by each and every one of its members over many years in the Service of the Fatherland!* (@PartidoChega 2021).

To conclude, I think the way in which *Chega* appropriates history and reinforces gendered nationalism is a way to reclaim a public space for men. That this fabricated nostalgia alludes to a past that in many ways never existed, does not really matter. The importance lies within the created narrative, which provides a ripe context for reclaiming an ideal type of masculinity that is linked to security, stability, power and order. As such, *Chega*'s memory politics fits well in *Chega*'s overall reactionary masculinity politics, as it alludes to a return to a patriarchal gender order that restores authority men feel they (might) have lost.

3.4. 'Gender ideology'

Comments related to so-called 'gender ideology' occurred 15 % in the total sample of tweets. In this section, we will see that *Chega*'s campaign against 'gender ideology' is the other side of the same coin as the glorification of the family, which reflects *Chega* identification of the Portuguese population in heteronormative and hierarchical terms. It is by means of this narrow understanding of the 'pure people' that Others are, as a consequence, being defined. Needless to say, perhaps, Others here are LGBTQ people.

From the work of Joane Nagel we know that in the process of the construction of the nation, the definition of who is excluded from the native group is just as important as the question of who is included. This is where the notion of abnormality comes into play. As Hall argued (1997: 237), boundary construction between inclusion and exclusion "leads us, symbolically, to close ranks, shore up culture and to stigmatize and expel anything which is defined as impure*, abnormal*" (my emphasis). Thus, one could say that *Chega's* project of mainstreaming ethnonationalism, and in-out group demarcation, can be made visible by looking at how

normalcy is constructed. This is where the topic 'gender ideology' becomes important, because *Chega*'s campaign and mobilization against it points to the way in which this normalcy is constructed. One explicit instance of this can be found in the latest political manifest from *Chega:*

> *"Chega came to refuse. To reject much of what today is taken as the standard of normality. To reject outright Cultural Marxism and all its array of deformed aberrations and absurd alternative realities. To refuse the dictatorship of Gender Ideology; to refuse abortion-on-demand or SEX-change surgeries paid for by taxpayers. Refuse state support for the whole panoply of the fruits of cultural Marxism".* (*Chega*, Political Manifest, 2022).

Here, 'gender ideology' is an imposed "absurd alternative reality" represented as abnormal. Related to this construction of deviance and wider processes of marginalization, Stanley Cohen's book *Moral Panic and Folk Devils,* originally published in 1973, can be of use. In this book, Cohen describes how through the construction of moral panics, so-called "moral entrepreneurs" are able to turn something or someone politically deviant. In other words, by defining a person, a situation or a group as a threat to social stability, moral entrepreneurs are able to stigmatize and marginalize those groups or individuals, thereby creating a moral panic. Thus, when *Chega,* operating as such a moral entrepreneur, advocates against "absurd" 'gender ideology', we should not only read this as an attack on gender equality, but also as a quest for legitimacy to dictate what is normal and what is not. This quest for epistemic legitimacy is something we also already have seen in *Chega*'s memory politics. What is happening here is that, by rendering something abnormal, *Chega* is mainstreaming the idea that so-called 'gender-ideology' is a threat to the well-being of the 'Good Portuguese'.

In the course of creating a moral panic around 'gender ideology', it appears that children, sexuality and gender education in schools are a serious area of discontent for *Chega.* This is also the case for other far-right parties in other countries in Europe, where the construction of childhood innocence is used as a justification to 'protect' children and minors from dangerous 'gender ideology' which is perceived as a threat. The assumption is that promotion of 'gender ideology' leads to hyper-sexualization of children and has harmful consequences for their development (Paternotte & Kuhar 2018: 10). In the case of *Chega,* childhood innocence is likewise instrumentalized in the construction of moral panics:

> *The Gender Dictatorship imposed on our children by left, extreme left and liberal forces is a usurpation of Education. The Educate family and the Teach school. We have to free our schools and our children from this gender ideology. #will not pass* (@PartidoChega 2022).

> *At 16 you can change your sex, but you can't watch a bullfight... For the right of children to participate freely in cultural and artistic life!* (@PartidoChega 2021).

> *O CHEGA defends that bullying should be a mandatory topic in the Citizenship and Development discipline. Our young people are our future. The School cannot shirk its responsibility to teach them that all acts of violence are reprehensible.* (@PartidoChega 2021).

> *Once again: #CHEGA promised and fulfilled! We have already presented a Bill to end the scourge of marriages with and between minors. We must protect our children and prevent them from being forced to marry in the name of any culture or tradition!* (@PartidoChega 2022).

A lot is happening here in the name of childhood innocence. In these tweets, *Chega* skillfully creates a moral panic around the vulnerability of children to maintain the hegemony of the nuclear family and the larger heteronormative social order. Let me however point out that, of course, children's vulnerability is something that people, as a community, need to be concerned for – but that speaks for itself. This is however not what is happening here. The construction of LGBTQ people as folk devils is a social response that, as also Cohen points out, is a misplaced and displaced response, it targets a target that is not the "real" problem (Cohen 2004: xxxi). By constructing LGBTQ people as folk devils, *Chega* creates moral panics that can then be used as a political strategy for mainstreaming the hegemony of the traditional nuclear family. Indeed, as the tweets point out, children's education forms a ripe context for *Chega* to intervene as a moral entrepreneur. Foucault's concept of "regimes of truth" (Foucault 1975: 30) as a technology of power can be a useful concept to understand why education is such a good context for intervention by *Chega.* Generally speaking, in most countries schooling is mandatory and can be a critical period for children's social and moral development. As such, schooling is a site where "truth regimes" operate, and can dictate a discourse that reinforces the hegemony of the most dominant and powerful groups. Relating this back to *Chega*'s construction of moral panics, one could say that education forms a site where children learn what is (by adults) considered as 'normal' knowledge for them, which of course, for *Chega*, has the potential to compromise children's innocence. That being said, I think *Chega*'s attack on 'gender ideology' complements the glorification of the nuclear family, a process discussed in the section on Othering. Children are effectively instrumentalized in this process, by creating a moral panic around childhood innocence. Creating LGBTQ Others is fundamental in this process. These Others are represented as folk evils, whose (homosexual) lifestyle has the potential to corrupt the innocent child. This again, reinforces *Chega*'s definition of the 'Good Portuguese' as a heteronormative hierarchical order, which is conceived as 'natural' and thus, by implication, 'normal'.

Conclusion

How is social recognition for hegemonic masculinity created by *Chega*? And what does this say about gender and right-wing populism more broadly? In this final section, I attempt to answer these questions by summarizing my analysis and discussing wider implications. In the first theme we have seen that the glorification of the nuclear family is a response to the perceived attack on the everydayness of hegemonic masculinity. The result is a reactionary masculinity lobby, which constructs Others as deviant if they fall outside of *Chega*'s definition of the 'Good Portuguese'. A second way to make sense of Chega's glorification of the family is to understand it as a way of doing heteronationalism. This, we have seen, relies on the latent use of homophobia: Others are constructed as Others if they are not part of the nuclear (heteronormative) family. Of course, not everybody who falls outside of the heteronormative family is per definition part of a LGBTQ community, but the stigmatization of other Others did not occur systematically in the data I analyzed. What remains to be further investigated is how *Chega*'s passive tolerance of gay people fits into this picture. What is clear however, is that *Chega* views the nuclear family as the main institution that represents the national identity of the Portuguese.

In the second theme we looked at *Chega*'s attacks on the elite and zoomed in on the party's main figure, André Ventura. Here we have seen that Ventura's political communication exhibits a clear strong-man style macho performance, which breaks with what is considered to be appropriate for politicians. Aware of this transgression, and somewhat proud of breaking with 'political correctness', Ventura also presents himself as a law-abiding and unapologetic politician. The image that he puts forward is that of a savior, somebody who 'really' cares about what has been done to the 'Good Portuguese', by those corrupt elites. What is more, by standing up for and talking about the 'Good Portuguese' over and over again, he communicates a direct link between himself and the 'authentic people' he is claiming to stand up for. This fits very well with Mudde's conception of populism as a main antagonism between 'the people'versus 'the (corrupted) elite', but complements the picture with a strong-man political communication style that demonstrates power, agency and resoluteness in the face of predicaments. Masculinity is clearly at work here in the background, and used to link populism with authoritarianism. This macho political communication adds up to Mudde's definition of populism as "a thin centered ideology", and complements it with gender, making it's thin centered ideology perhaps a bit more thick. The implication of the use of masculinity for populism in this context is that a direct

rule from the leader over the people does not need further legitimation, because Ventura's domination stands in for it. That being said, Ventura's politics, and perhaps populist authoritarian communication style in general, could be further conceptualized with Connell as a form of protest masculinity, but at the same time also deviates from this conception, as, unlike Connell writes, Ventura's protest masculinity and leadership surely leads to a new political direction. It would be interesting to compare Ventura's political communication style with other far-right populist in Europe, to see differences or overlap. Perhaps it would also be interesting to compare his political performance as a political opponent fighting against the system, with his performance as an established member of the parliament.

In *Chega*'s memory politics, the ambition to restore a conservative gender order is not always explicit, but a case can be made that *Chega* attempts to appropriate Portuguese history and by doing so, reinforces a gendered nationalism that paves the way for men to reclaim public space (like back in the old days, one could say). History is strategically appropriated for this quest, and *Chega*'s discourse on national history could therefore be seen as a way of doing metapolitics, or a hegemonic struggle in the Gramscian sense. The framework about a national past is also used to, once again, reinforce the image and identity of the 'Good Portuguese'. The positive presentation of a national past is contrasted with a negative presentation of those who challenge this glorification, and who are, in the vision of *Chega*'s vice president Mithá Ribeiro, directly attacking the party itself. The fact that the nostalgia that is fabricated pictures a national past that never really existed is a secondary matter. The importance lies within the narrative that mobilizes a recognition for times in which masculinity was linked with security, stability, and power and order. In this theme, masculinity was not thematized explicitly, but not absent either. To decide what is 'true' and what is not, is an exercise of power, and since history can be a strong way to consolidate the identity of a population, *Chega* strategically uses and manipulates national history for political purposes.

The last theme on 'gender ideology' complemented the first theme on Othering. In *Chega*'s attack on 'gender ideology', LGBTQ people are constructed as so-called folk devils, and in the name of childhood innocence, they are marginalized and excluded from *Chega*'s conception of the 'Good Portuguese'. This latent homophobia is something we have already seen in the first section on Othering. What is remarkable, however, is that children are effectively used in this. That is, even though *Chega* claims to protect young and innocent children, by creating a moral panic about childhood innocence, children are used and framed as a commodity for a political strategy that attempts to mainstream the hegemony of the heteronormative nuclear family. Next to that, children's education provides also a ripe context for *Chega* to intervene and impose

their "regimes of truth", to speak with Foucault, on children's education. Here, *Chega* tries to use children to foster their own conservative political agenda. All in all, *Chega's* anti-gender campaign in the name of childhood innocence fits well in *Chega'*s overall reactionary masculinity politics, as it alludes to a return to a patriarchal gender order that restores authority men feel they (might) have lost.

Of course, there are some shortcomings to this thesis. For practical reasons, I chose not to do interviews with *Chega* members. This however, would have made the thesis richer, and perhaps the analysis a bit thicker. Another possible shortcoming was that I do not speak Portuguese. This resulted in that fact that before doing any analysis, I had to translate all the material into English. This could result in missing out some specific Portuguese details, which were lost in translation.

Let me conclude that social recognition for hegemonic masculinity is (of course) never directly claimed by *Chega.* It happens on a more subtle level, for instance by means of a positive national self-presentation versus a negative Other presentation, or by manipulating social reactions in favor of their own conservative political agenda. In all the themes we have discussed so far, *Chega* attempts to pave the way for a return of traditional masculinity, although it is never explicitly stated. However, I argue that *Chega*'s right-wing populism relies on hegemonic masculinity that is at work in the background. This is implicit in the glorification of the 'Good Portuguese', which echoes a heteronationalist project. Traditional masculinity is explicit in Ventura's macho political communication style and embedded in *Chega*'s nostalgia for the past, where history is manipulated and appropriated. Last but not least, *Chega*'s marginalization of LGBTQ people, by creating moral panics about the wellbeing of children, also relies on strict heteronormativity, and thus ultimately, on hegemonic masculinity. It is thus not a stretch to say that masculinity is at work in Chega's political quest and underpins their populist direction. The challenge, however, is that hegemonic masculinity, as I used it throughout this thesis following Connell, has to be done continuously. As a power practice, it needs to be legitimized in order to keep on going. This will remain *Chega*'s day to day challenge.

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