

UNIVERZITET U SARAJEVU – FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET
ODSJEK ZA ANGLISTIKU

ZAVRŠNI RAD

**(VELIKOBRITANSKA) MUŠKOSFERA: ONLAJN SUPKULTURE KRAJNJE
DESNICE**

Mentor: van. prof. dr. Faruk Bajraktarević

Student: Vedad Kobiljak

Sarajevo, Januar, 2024

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UNIVERSITY OF SARAJEVO- FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

FINAL PAPER

(GREAT BRITISH) MANOSPHERE: ONLINE FAR RIGHT SUBCULTURES

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Sarajevo, January, 2025

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APSTRAKT

Predmet istraživanja ovog završnog rada je skup zajednica koje sačinjavaju online supkulturu *manosphere* („muškosfera“), odnosno široki spekter web stranica, blogova, online foruma i drugih sadržaja čija je zajednička odlika promocija muškosti, kritika feminizma i odbacivanje normi na kojima počivaju kriteriji političke korektnosti, koji se unutar ovih grupa percipiraju kao prevashodno usmjereni protiv (bijelih, heteroseksualnih) muškaraca. Rad je utemeljen na recentnim i referentnim istraživanjima alternativnih medija desnog spektra (Atton, 2004; Holt, 2020; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2024) i fokusiran na online prisustvo istaknutih predstavnika muškosfere, kao što su Andrew Tate ili Tommy Robinson, čiji se specifični maskulinistički, antifeministički, ali i islamofobni stavovi analiziraju kroz nekoliko izabраниh statusa na Twitteru. Uloga ovih harizmatičnih vođa se tumači u širim kriznim okvirima društveno-političkih previranja i kulturnih ratova, u kojima sve istaknutije mjesto uživa diskurs karakterističan za ovakve lidere i zajednice koje predstavljaju.

Ključne riječi: Andrew Tate, antifeminizam, islamofobija, muškosfera (manosfera), Tommy Robinson

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a diverse collection of communities that make up the online subculture known as the manosphere, which includes a wide range of websites, blogs, online forums, and other content. The manosphere promotes masculinity, criticizes feminism, and rejects the norms of political correctness, which are perceived within these groups as primarily directed against (white heterosexual) men. The thesis is based on recent and relevant research on right-wing alternative media (Atton, 2004; Holt, 2020; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2024) and focuses on the online presence of prominent representatives of the manosphere, such as Andrew Tate and Tommy Robinson, whose specific masculinist, anti-feminist, and Islamophobic views are interpreted through a selection of Twitter posts. The role of these charismatic leaders is viewed within a broader framework of socio-political alterations and culture wars, where the discourse characteristic of such leaders and the communities they represent is increasingly prominent.

Keywords: Andrew Tate, anti-feminism, Islamophobia, manosphere, Tommy Robinson

Introduction

The term "manosphere" refers to a loosely organized network of groups on social media platforms, blogs, websites, forums, and online communities focused on discussing men's issues and masculinity. According to *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.), the manosphere refers to “websites and internet discussion groups that are concerned with men’s interests and rights as opposed to women’s, often connected with opposition to feminism or dislike of women”. Differing in specific interests, they share core values, some of which may be seen as “neutral or benign” (Delaney, 2024), such the importance of men’s mental health and prevention of domestic violence against men, but most of which are toxic and extreme, as evidenced in the misogynistic, homophobic and racist rhetoric used across various online platforms (Farrell et al., 2019). Different groups associated with the manosphere¹ often identify a bias against white heterosexual men present in society under the overwhelming influence of feminist ideologies, to which they are opposed in various degrees. The manosphere has evolved significantly over the past years, from relatively palatable communities like *Pick-Up Artists* and *Men’s Rights Activists* to more extreme and toxic groups like *Incels* and *Men Going Their Own Way*, reflecting broader societal issues around gender and online behavior (Ribiero et. al, 2021).

Expectedly, the UK has not remained immune to the manosphere related phenomena, so Richard Windsor in his article for *The Week* (2024) cites a recent police report highlighting a rise in radicalized young men in the UK, attributing it to extreme online content and misogynistic influencers, two of which are in focus of this paper. *The Hope not Hate Report* (2019) identifies important overlaps between the manosphere’s anti-feminist and misogynistic rhetoric with far-right and alt-right communities, highlighting that such may not have significant influence in the mainstream politics,² their ideas remain “endemic issues in the UK”.

Drawing from a growing body of literature on digital extremism and far-right movements, this thesis first offers a brief overview of the manosphere’s significance within a peculiar context of growing economic uncertainties, cultural anxieties and political polarization in the UK and across the globe, which in turn resulted in a noticeable surge in popularity of far-right ideologies and their presence on social media and online platforms over the past decade. The thesis then

¹ Erica Delaney (2024) identifies Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs), Involuntary Celibates (Incels), Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), Pick-Up Artists (PUAs) as some of the main subgroups within the manosphere.

² The report identifies Mike Buchanan’s Justice for Men and Boys (J4MB) as the only political party in the UK primarily focused on anti-feminism.

offers a critical content analysis of selected tweets of representative figures of (British) manosphere, Andrew Tate and Tommy Robinson,³ in order to illustrate how online and offline far-right movements capitalize on widespread fears of globalization, immigration, social transformation, its charismatic leaders presenting themselves as heroic warriors against the corrupt establishment and defenders of traditional social norms, national identity and sovereignty, influencing young followers and further deepening social divisions and conflicts. The thesis ends by offering an alternative to such influences through the notion of positive masculinity, which encourages young men not only to challenge harmful stereotypes about themselves and others but also to endorse values traditionally associated with masculinity in order to promote ideas of a more inclusive society.

This thesis is founded upon a growing body of research which explores the complex character of the manosphere, its online communities and other right-wing alternative media. In light of the “post-subcultural turn” Andy Bennett (2011) investigates in his work, any analysis of the manosphere cannot fully rely on the class-based tenets of subcultural theory but also cannot ignore “structural inequalities” (494) which define (sub)cultural affiliations and identities of contemporary youth as consumers of content with local and global influence (504). Ross Haenfler’s pedagogical website of Grinnell College explores deviant subcultures and the ways they express themselves through online media. Virtual spaces - in which the manosphere communities are established - are viewed as platforms of free expression in opposition to oppressive societal structures, offering a degree of freedom and security to those that can’t find it in the real world. They, furthermore, provide a means for members of subcultures to communicate and engage in subcultural activities across geographical boundaries, “real-life” social contexts and other constraints. *Kill All Normies* (2017) by Angela Nagle explores the rise of online culture wars, delving into the origins and evolution of internet subcultures, examining how they have influence mainstream politics and society. Through a series of case studies that illustrate the importance of the Internet in shaping cultural and political alternatives, Chris Atton

³ While not typically linked to the manosphere, as defined in the introductory paragraphs, Robinson has infused his far-right ideas of resistance against the enemy, typically Islam, with masculine “heroic” values. Laura Hood (2024) thus observes that:

Following the Southport attack, Robinson told men that they need to prepare to become a “dedicated, fit, healthy, ready, British resistance”.

Robinson began the video in which he made this statement by telling viewers he had just completed a workout – emulating something misogynist influencer Andrew Tate is known for. Tate’s entire messaging is aimed at young men and is one long sales pitch of aspirational “warrior-businessman” masculinity, in the face of a culture of emasculation led by liberal government and empowered women.

(2004; 2006) examines, among other topics, the interaction between the discourse and power in right-wing media and far right political formations opposing dominant media practices. Kristoffer Holt's book *Right-Wing Alternative Media* (2020) also offers an analysis of the rise and impact of right-wing alternative media in the context of the rise of right-wing populism, citing examples from countries like Brazil, the United States, Germany and Finland. *Intimate Communities of Hate: Why Social Media Fuels Far-Right Extremism* (2024) by Anton Törnberg and Petter Törnberg explores the specific role of social media in the transformation of political life and the rise of far-right extremism. In this overview of emotional and social effects of being part of an extremist community, the authors identify an important sense of collectiveness and belonging among the members of a digital political tribe. In his text "The New Language of Hate: Misogyny and the Alt-right" Daniel Odin Shaw analyzes anti-feminist online forums, arguing that their rhetoric should be read as "a transference of anxieties arising from the neoliberal economic system onto women and sexual minorities" (2018, 186). Debbie Ging's article "Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinities of the Manosphere" discusses how antifeminist toxic rhetoric evolved (see also Farrell et al., 2019; Jakubowicz, 2017; Ribiero et al., 2021) and the traditional notions of hegemonic masculinity have been complicated by social media, which created space for new "hybrid masculinities" relying on "tropes of victimhood, 'beta masculinity' and involuntary celibacy (incels)" (2017, 1). In their analysis of the role of social media in creation of socio-political polarization, Jay J. Van Bavel et al. (2021) highlight major processes through which social media influences political polarization. Users, according to them, tend to engage with the content that aligns with their political views, consuming divisive and partisan messages which further deepen existing divisions. That practice often stems from platform design and algorithms, which prioritize emotionally charged partisan content. All these factors should be taken into consideration when analyzing the online presence of the manosphere's representative figures, like Andrew Tate and Tommy Robinson.

The Socio-Political Dimensions of the Manosphere: Between Precariousness and Hegemony

A new study by King's College London and Ipsos UK (2024) found a growing gender divide among young people's attitudes towards masculinity and women's equality with the following key findings:

- Young men are less positive than young women about the impact of feminism, with 36% of young men thinking it has done more harm than good, compared to 9% of young women.
- There is a significant gender gap in views on whether it's harder to be a woman or a man today, with 68% of young women aged 16-29 saying it's harder to be a woman, compared to 35% of young men.
- Young men are more likely to think it will be harder to be a man than a woman in 20 years' time, with 30% of young men aged 16-29 agreeing, compared to 48% of young women.
- The study found that young men are more likely to have a favorable view of influencer Andrew Tate, with 19% of young men aged 16-29 having a positive view of him.
- The researchers warn of a risk of fractious division among young people, with a need for more work to understand the challenges facing young men today.

These findings suggest a changing gender dynamic and “rising female empowerment”, perceived among the manosphere communities as major threats against masculinity (Newz.com, 2024). This further suggests that the manosphere's importance goes beyond online forums and social media and has real-life implications by fostering gender divisions and contributing to other societal issues like racism and homophobia. This is why analysts argue that the manosphere, founded upon the notion of hegemonic masculinity, defined by Raewyn W. Connell as a set of beliefs and practices, “which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (in Haslop et al, 2024, 3) should be understood not as “a novel or exclusively online phenomenon” but within its broader socio-political context (in Aiston, 2023).⁴ Maintaining the hegemonic aspects of masculinity through online homosociality (Haslop et al., 2024), the manosphere in the UK has been influenced by

⁴ See also: Eglee Ortega Fernández “The Manosphere and its evolution in sociopolitical dynamics: a systematic review of academic publications (2018-2023)“, <https://epsir.net/index.php/epsir/article/view/536>

several socio-political factors, such as the rise of right-wing populism, whose representatives are viewed as embodiments of aspirations of frustrated young British men, who identify various threats in the changing gender dynamics and progressive social changes and, more importantly, economic challenges, such as the cost-of-living crisis, inflation and job insecurity.⁵ Openly expressed within online communities that are seen as spaces of interaction and exchange, such frustrations are also exploited by the manosphere leaders and other ideologues and figures whose ideas further emphasize neoliberal core tenets like individualism and personal responsibility or use the feelings of “precariousness of being” (Young, 2007, 3) to “mobiliz[e] difference” (Young, 10) through collective ideologies like nationalism, masculinism and anti-feminism (Gainey, 2024). Maxime Dafaure (2022) thus observes that:

[i]t has indeed been noted that there is significant overlapping, if not fusion, between the manosphere and online far-right subcultures focused on race. A noteworthy illustration of this phenomenon is the cooptation by racist groups of the manosphere’s “red pill” metaphor which relies on exactly the same kind of inversion of power differentials: society is actually structurally organized to favour women and/or minorities, men and/or white people are the real oppressed victims.

⁵ More about the current challenges faced by the UK in M Rahman’s PESTEL analysis of the UK (2024), available at: <https://www.howandwhat.net/pestel-analysis-uk/?form=MG0AV3>

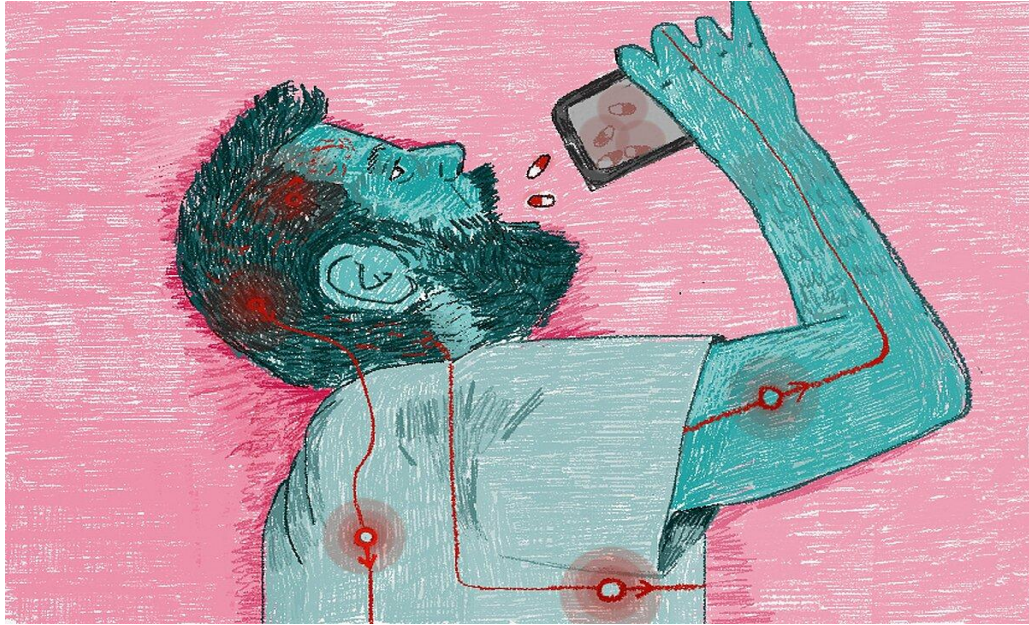


Illustration by Marah Al Houjairy⁶

To sum up, the manosphere as a (post)subculture could be defined as:

Ideologically diverse: People in the manosphere frequently have a sense of identification and solidarity that is based on their shared experiences of being marginalised as well as their shared desire for approval and validation. The manosphere, however, is not a homogeneous group, despite common themes of supporting men’s causes, anti-feminist content and the promotion of the so called “red pill” ideology. It includes a broad spectrum of views, ranging from the sexist and misogynistic MGTOW to the more moderate MRA.

Counter-Cultural: The manosphere frequently takes a stand against the media and social conventions, contesting feminist viewpoints and promoting different accounts of gender interactions. Their countercultural ideas are often based on conspiracy theories, particularly those that suggest that heterosexual white men and/or other dominant groups are in danger.

Digital: The manosphere is thriving on the internet, where it may share ideas, create communities, and exchange experiences through forums, social media, and video platforms.

⁶ Source: Sara Kaddoura (2024), The Arab Manosphere: a New Wave of Western Misogyny in the MENA Region, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, <https://feminism-mena.fes.de/e/the-arab-manosphere-a-new-wave-of-western-misogyny-in-the-mena-region.html>

Well-known websites and YouTube channels have developed into important gathering places for conversation and hiring.

Several factors have contributed to the manosphere's development into a (post)subculture:

Cultural Shifts: Gender roles are changing, and feminist movements are becoming more visible. This has led some men to look for forums where their opinions are heard and respected.

Economic Pressures: Men's feelings of disenfranchisement have been made worse by economic instability and changing labour markets, which has fuelled the development of communities that cater to these fears.

Technological Advancements: The emergence of social media and the internet has given like-minded people the means to interact, exchange content, and create communities beyond national boundaries.

Media Representation: Men who find that the mainstream media frequently presents masculinity in a negative or too simplified manner turn to the manosphere for alternative portrayals and conversations on masculinity.

Identity Crisis: Certain males are going through an identity crisis as a result of the quick changes in society standards around gender and sexuality. They can investigate and reinterpret what it means to be a man in the twenty-first century in the manosphere.

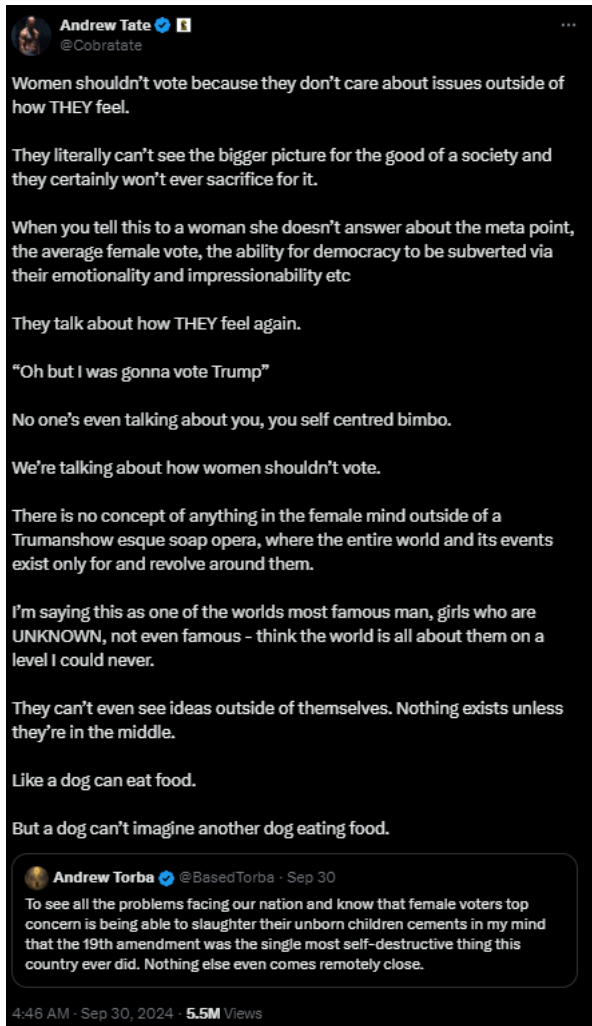
Charismatic Leaders: Online Presence and Offline Influences

The rise of the manosphere is largely due to the impact of charismatic leaders who have skillfully used internet platforms to spread their message and inspire followers. These individuals have influenced larger cultural and political debates in addition to shaping the manosphere by their compelling communication, autobiographical stories, and quick solutions to challenges faced by young men. In the manosphere, charismatic leaders display several essential characteristics that increase their influence, such as the establishment of the emotional connection with the followers, appealing to them as authentic voices of reason in a chaotic world, promoting what is perceived to be not only freedom of speech but true equality between genders and/or ethnic groups, often employing humor as “a homosocial currency” (Haslop et al., 2024, 6-8). They are often talented writers and speakers who can distil complex ideas into engaging and accessible messages. Their persuasive communication builds strong loyalty and trust among their followers. Additionally, many of these leaders share personal stories of struggle and success, which help them appear relatable and credible to their audiences. Their ideas offer a clear direction and purpose, addressing the practical and existential concerns of men who feel marginalized by contemporary social standards. These leaders amplify their influence through effective use of digital platforms. Social media, blogs, podcasts, YouTube, and other channels have become essential tools for building dynamic communities and reaching large audiences. Through these media, leaders engage their followers, disseminate their ideas, and forge robust networks that reinforce their ideologies. Some notable figures have secured the status of charismatic leaders in the manosphere over the past decade – Andrew Tate, Tommy Robinson, Roosh V, Paul Elam, Mike Buchanan, Raheem Kassam, and, to some extent, Piers Morgan and Candace Owens. The power these individuals hold over their respective audiences is largely attributed to powerful rhetoric and emotional appeals. Research on charismatic leadership (see Cleland, 2020) shows that charismatic leaders create strong emotional bonds with their audiences, inspiring followers to embrace their vision. This emotional connection often leads followers to adopt the leader’s worldview and behaviors, further enhancing the leader’s influence within the manosphere. However, charismatic leadership can also have negative consequences, as followers may become overly dependent on the leader’s ideology, leading to the uncritical acceptance of divisive or harmful ideas. This dynamic is especially evident in the manosphere, where figures like Andrew Tate and Tommy Robinson – whose online presence will be of interest in this section - have cultivated devoted followings by challenging societal norms and projecting an image of authenticity

This section of the thesis will closely focus on selected examples of online content created by two figures who have cast themselves as the manosphere's representatives and have gained notoriety over the past decade. The first one is Andrew Tate, whose significant presence on the internet or, more specifically, "alternative social media platforms" (O'Leary, 2023) has been marked by numerous controversies, which resulted in him being banned from several social media platforms (Van Bree, 2023). Tate is also famous for launching his own online "university", initially called *Hustler's University* and later rebranded as *The Real World*, which offers courses on fitness, finance, content creation etc. Facing charges for human trafficking and rape, Tate has remained a very popular influencer among young men and continued to create polarizing online content (Joseph, 2024; Van Bree, 2023). The other one is Tommy Robinson (Stephen Yaxley-Lennon) has also faced bans and restrictions on social media platforms, but has continued to influence and mobilize his audience through his online content, which is often characterized by far-right Islamophobic rhetoric (Hagopian, 2024; Moss, 2018). Robinson had also co-founded the *English Defence League* (EDL) in 2009 and actively participated in a number of far-right anti-Islam events before stepping down in 2013. Like Tate, Robinson has faced multiple legal issues and several prison sentences for contempt of court charges and libel cases (SkyNews, 2024). Both Tate and Robinson check the boxes for charismatic leaders as proposed by House and Aditya (1997) and cited by Cleland (2020, 49), exerting self-confidence and motivation "to attain and assert influence and have a strong moral conviction in their beliefs by retaining persistence despite the lack of acceptance they might receive from wider society" (Cleland, 2020, 49). Both figures foreground their "salvationist" (Hofmann, 2015, 715 in Cleland, 2020, 48) roles in fighting the establishment (Robinson's 2015 autobiography is titled *Enemy of the State*) and its institutions, including, in Tate's case, formal education (Williams, 2023), voting, mental health. The thesis analyzes four selected Twitter posts, viewing this platform as an important instance of numerous significant debates surrounding the idea of free speech, especially following its acquisition by Elon Musk, a self-proclaimed "free speech absolutist" (Martin, 2022). This analysis will focus on the language of Tate's and Robinson's social media content using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) three-dimensional framework created by Norman Fairclough (see Mucak, 2024) examining not only the linguistic features of the content but also its production, distribution and consumption within, as indicated above, a broader sociocultural context, showing, in Fairclough's words, "a[n] interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, abuse, and political-economic or cultural change in society" (in Aiston, 2019). In their joint thesis, Gabriel Frejsjö and Noah Wernersson Birgersson (2023) also study Andrew Tate's online presence (on TikTok) through

the lens of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), analyzing the ways in which his videos promote and legitimize power relations Andrew Tate stands for through a combination of various semiotic resources, such as the clothing or the visuals (33-34). Drawing from Fairclough's view (2003) of discourse as a political tool potentially effecting change in other aspects of social life, Van Bree (2023) cites Tate as an exemplary discursive fighter who actively discredits the established views or the matrix and attempts to normalize his ideas among the followers.

Fighting the Matrix: Andrew Tate's Controversial Digital Persona



For instance, in one of his notorious tweets,⁷ a typical example of the manosphere's targeting of women and feminism (Farrell et al, 2019, 87) by drawing broad conclusions about women's alleged priorities and abilities, Tate presents a categorical argument against their right to vote. Tate's assertion is made as a firm belief, suggesting that women's viewpoints are essentially limited and selfish. Tate denies the possibility of complexity or diversity in women's perspectives by presenting his thesis as an unquestionable truth, implying that women's attention to their own feelings keeps them from comprehending larger societal issues. The statement's form establishes a binary opposition between the perceived duties and sacrifices of men and women, reinforcing a gendered stereotype that minimizes women's contributions to public life. In addition to

assuming that men are better equipped for leadership roles in society, this view suggests that women are incapable or unwilling to act in the best interests of the collective. Tate's argument decreases women's value in the public realm by confining their potential influence to self-interest, which is consistent with traditional attitudes that limit women's roles to private issues. This strategy reinforces retrograde gender norms by upholding the long-standing myth that women are unsuited to participate in societal decision-making.

⁷ Source: Tate, Andrew (@Cobratate). 2024. "Women shouldn't vote." Twitter (now X), Sep 30. <https://x.com/Cobratate/status/1840584094331310417>.

Tate's statement has a tone of authority that implies his claim is a factual norm rather than a subjective opinion because of the declarative words he utilizes to support his position as an unquestionable reality. Taking a normative stance and suggesting a strong recommendation or command, Tate positions himself as an arbiter of acceptable political behavior and, more importantly, of moral or ethical standards that he believes should be followed. As someone who tries to assume power over political participation, Tate continues to support the standard, further building the us-versus-them mentality within his digital tribe as "a shared sense of collective self, a distinct worldview, and a potent emotional drive to engage in collective action" (Törnberg & Törnberg, 28).

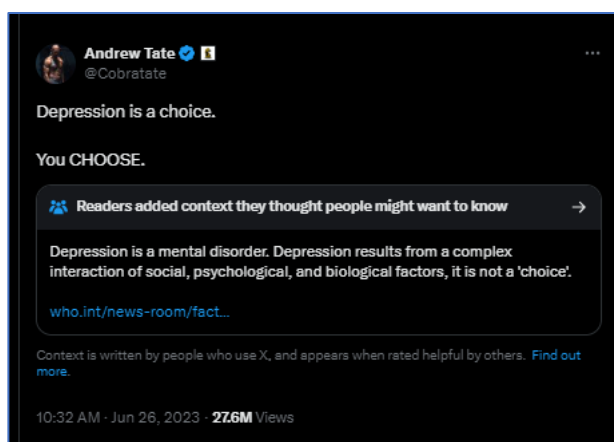
Universal subjects and negative verbs are introduced by phrases like "they don't care" and "they can't see," which portray women as innately uninterested in or unable to understand social issues outside their personal emotions. By avoiding any qualifiers like "some women" or "might," Tate's grammar suggests that these traits apply to all women without exception, reinforcing the misogynistic stereotype of women as selfish and narrow-minded. A monolithic vision of women that ignores any potential variance in viewpoints or intentions is presented by the absence of conditional or hedging language, which reinforces the statement's absolutism and eliminates space for individual differences. By using this terminology, Tate's statement effectively undermines women's credibility in civic affairs by presenting a severe, contemptuous, and constrictive view of women's duties and capacities.

By presenting women in a decidedly negative light, Tate's statement appeals to the audience's emotions by using emotive language to arouse feelings of annoyance and contempt. As intensifiers, words like "literally" and "certainly" support the veracity and absoluteness of his assertion. These remarks strengthen the unfavorable impression of women as essentially selfish and incapable of putting the good of society first, giving his claim more support and making it seem indisputable. By portraying women as obstacles to society advancement, this wording aims to appeal to people who might already harbor prejudices against them and elicit feelings of rage or agreement. Furthermore, Tate's language polarizes gender norms and incites animosity by portraying men as more capable or unselfish. By implying that women's alleged lack of "sacrifice" or "big picture" thinking not only disqualifies them from voting but also impedes societal advancement, the statement plays on the dissatisfaction of the audience. This framing implies that women are innately unsuited to engage in civic decision-making, which not only marginalizes them but also appeals to a deeper narrative of societal duty. Tate's

emotionally charged argument reinforces a divided gender hierarchy by portraying men as the legitimate defenders of social ideals and manipulating his audience into seeing women as enemies to group objectives.

Tate creates a dichotomy where gender is portrayed as an immutable determinant of one's capacity for civic engagement by portraying women as self-centered and implicitly comparing them with males who make sacrifices for the "greater good." The argument is strengthened by the absence of qualifiers like "some women" or "may not," which portray Tate's viewpoint as a universally applicable fact rather than an opinion. By portraying men as naturally more capable and responsible and women as lacking these qualities, this strategy promotes a divisive viewpoint. In the end, the absolutist terminology promotes a simplistic and divided perception of society contributions by dismissing any possibility for diversity in comprehending gender roles and reinforcing the perceived authority of Tate's stance by such sharp contrasts.

Tate's statement tends to be dismissive of women's participation in society concerns since it relies on implied comparisons rather than explicit metaphors. The statement "can't see the bigger picture" implies that women lack the "vision" required to engage in civic affairs by figuratively linking "seeing" to comprehending or giving priority to the requirements of society as a whole. This posture frames males as the responsible stewards of society, suggesting that they have the insight to "see" the wider societal impact. Additionally, the word "sacrifice" adds a moral undertone by comparing civic engagement to a selfless obligation, so excluding from decision-making those who, in his opinion, lack the potential for such selflessness—in this case, women.



The tweet "Depression is a choice. You CHOOSE"⁸ carries a heavy implication that individuals who experience depression have willingly opted into their condition. In this tweet Tate again positions himself as an authority, this time on mental health, undermining the expertise of mental health professionals. The statement presents an

⁸ Source: Tate, Andrew (@Cobratate). 2023. "Depression is a choice." Twitter (now X), Jun 26. <https://x.com/Cobratate/status/1673247890582413313?lang=en>.

oversimplified and contemptuous perspective of mental health because it is brief and straightforward, leaving little opportunity for subtlety or understanding. It successfully minimizes the complicated, frequently involuntary character of depression and ignores the underlying biological, psychological, and social factors that contribute to it by reducing it to a matter of personal willpower or decision-making.

"You CHOOSE" is a straightforward but forceful statement, designed to make a clear claim that is unlikely to be contested. In order to depict the phrase "Depression is a choice" as a universal truth rather than a personal view, the present tense "is" is used. This wording reduces mental health concerns to a personal responsibility without acknowledging the intricacies that are normally involved with them. Avoiding modal verbs like "might be" or "can sometimes feel like," the statement suggests that this viewpoint is undeniable and universally relevant to everyone who is depressed. The capitalization of the second part of the statement, "You CHOOSE," adds emphasis and produces a visual intensity that nearly acts as a direct accusation. The phrase is transformed into an aggressive, proactive direction by the imperative mood, implying that people with depression actively choose to live with their illness. The syntax suggests that people have total control over their mental state by portraying depression as a straightforward decision.

This statement's expressive wording is harsh and accusing, designed to elicit strong feelings. Words like "choice" and "choose" are loaded with meanings of personal accountability, independence, and control—elements that frequently have positive connotations of strength and self-determination. But in this context, they are used to portray depression as a purposeful choice rather than a mental illness, which can make those who suffer from depression feel guilty, inadequate, or self-blameful. Such language might reinforce stigmatizing notions that mental health problems are merely a matter of willpower by implying that persons who are suffering from depression have somehow failed to take charge of their circumstances. The terminology may support a judgmental, oversimplified perspective for an audience that is not familiar with the complexities of mental illness. By portraying depression as a decision, the statement could give the impression that those who suffer from depression are unwilling to deal with their problems or are just not interested in making their lives better. By appealing to cultural norms on independence and fortitude, this use of emotive language subtly supports the notion that people who are unable to "choose" their way out of depression are weak or deficient in some other way. As a result, the phrase appeals to judgement rather than empathy, furthering

stigmatization.

By implying that those who suffer from depression lack self-control or self-discipline, this framing may serve to perpetuate negative stereotypes. This analogy may increase feelings of guilt or shame for those who are depressed, while it perpetuates the idea that all it takes to overcome depression is a "choice" for others who have not personally experienced it. By hiding the real difficulties that people with depression encounter and thus deterring others from feeling sympathy and understanding, this distortion feeds stigma.

This statement's wording leaves no room for interpretation and subtlety, particularly when it comes to phrases like "is" and "choose." By stating that "depression is a choice," the statement implies that everyone who suffers from depression has made a conscious decision to live with their illness. This framing reduces mental health to a simple issue of willpower, ignoring its complicated, nuanced nature and the enormous range of individual experiences. Here, absolute language promotes a strict, binary perspective in which people either "choose" happiness or "choose" depression, with no room for compromise or consideration of the impact of situational, psychological, or biological factors. Instead than recognizing the wide range of social, environmental, and medical factors that contribute to disorders like depression, this lack of nuance promotes a reductive viewpoint that portrays mental health as a simple matter of personal choice. Because it suggests that anyone may "choose" their way out of depression, the statement's binary formulation feeds negative stereotypes and makes it simpler for audiences to condemn or ignore people who battle with mental health issues.

By classifying depression as a "choice," the phrase cleverly uses a metaphor, comparing it to routine decisions that are easily controlled, like choosing an outfit or a place to live. By implying that depression is as easily handled as any other everyday personal choice, this implied similarity oversimplifies and minimizes the experience. By portraying depression in this manner, the statement implies that people have complete control over whether or not they experience it, trivializing the serious and frequently uncontrollable nature of mental illness. By neglecting the many interactions between biological, environmental, and psychological elements that affect mental health, this simplistic metaphor encourages the misconception that depression is merely a mental state that one may "opt out of."

The casual, combative tone, which is emphasized by the forceful phrase "You CHOOSE," is

reminiscent of the raw tone typical of social media discourse, which aims to come out as straightforward and approachable. This stylistic technique presents the statement as a strong, straightforward viewpoint and gives the appearance of clarity and authority. This tone is further enhanced by capitalizing “CHOOSE,” which visually intensifies the message and appeals to people used to the direct tone frequently found in online self-help or “tough love” marketing. This casual style can give the statement a forceful and convincing appearance, especially to those who are attracted to clear-cut solutions and straightforward language. However, many who see depression as a complex, uncontrollable affliction may feel alienated or even distressed by this casual yet authoritative tone. The combative rhetoric may come across as condescending to people who are depressed, implying a lack of understanding or empathy for the reality of mental health. The statement lacks nuance and may unintentionally perpetuate negative stigmas by downplaying the complexity of mental illness, which could further misunderstand or condemn those who are depressed.

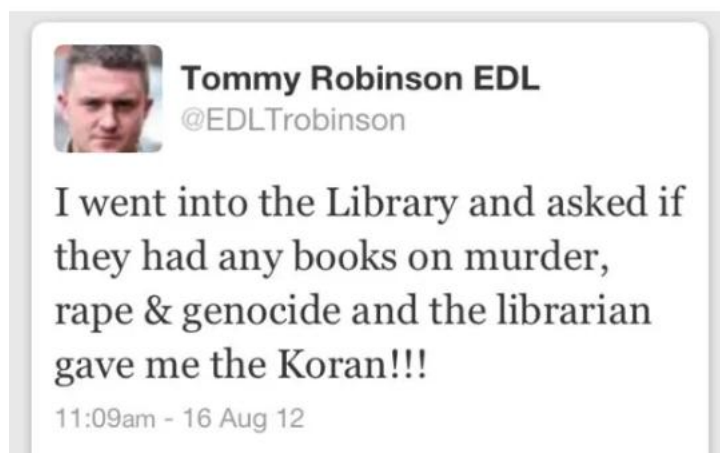
Islamophobia and Identity: Tommy Robinson's Presence within the Manosphere



In the first cited tweet, posted following the Finsbury Park attack on June 19, 2017 in London, when Darren Osbourne drove a van into a group of Muslim worshippers, killing one man and injuring eleven others. During the trial, it was revealed that Osbourne regularly read Robinson's inflammatory posts expressing open anti-Muslim sentiments (MEND, 2018),⁹

spreading misinformation and inciting fear and anger among individuals like Osbourne. In this tweet, Robinson also portrays the mosque as a source of danger in the neighborhood by making broad generalizations about it and directly connecting it to radicalization, terrorism, and divisive ideas and practices. This framing implies that the mosque's presence is essentially detrimental to the local community and to British society as a whole, portraying it as both ideologically hostile and actively involved in creating social divisions and threats. The wording openly expresses the idea that the mosque is to blame for far-right extremism and violence against the worshippers, viewed as an act of cleansing and threat prevention. In this "us vs. them" framework, Robinson's followers like Osbourne are indirectly portrayed as heroic individuals protecting the native British population from the external jihadist threat. Offering no evidence to support the claims, Robinson creates an emotional reaction that might incite further hate and violence among the followers influenced by his self-presentation as a defender of the British values.

⁹ Since Tommy Robinson is no longer on Twitter (now X), the status was cited from: MEND: Muslim Engagement and Development. 2018. "Tommy Robinson permanently removed from Twitter." March 29. <https://www.mend.org.uk/tommy-robinson-permanently-removed-twitter/>.



In the tweet “I went into the Library and asked if they had any books on murder, rape & genocide and the librarian gave me the Koran!!!”¹⁰Robinson presents an unsubstantiated and inflammatory claim that directly associates the Quran with acts of “murder, rape & genocide.” By framing the anecdote

as a personal experience, Robinson insinuates that the Quran inherently endorses or promotes violence and criminal behavior, a portrayal that is both misleading and harmful. This statement implies a simplistic, monolithic view of Islam, suggesting that the sacred text of millions globally is synonymous with violence. By choosing highly emotive words like “murder,” “rape,” and “genocide,” Robinson amplifies the offensive character of Islam, framing the Quran not as a spiritual or moral guide but as a “manual” for violence.

The tweet is crafted as a brief first-hand genuine anecdote about an ordinary uninformed reader without any initial prejudice against Islam and a librarian, an expert navigator, who immediately associated the Koran and Islam with the key concepts denoting brutal violence. This portrayal again leverages negative stereotypes to cast Islam as inherently dangerous and incompatible with “British” values. This tweet not only dismisses the Quran’s teachings on compassion, community, and ethics but also seeks to distort its role as a spiritual text, appealing instead to divisive, fear-inciting stereotypes. The casual goes-without-saying correlation between murder, rape, genocide and the Koran, followed by three exclamation marks, conveys a sense of feigned astonishment and creates a “we all knew it, didn’t we?” effect and amusement among the audience that already harbors anti-Islamic views. Muslims are thus not only incompatible with British core values but are completely dehumanized and portrayed as a dangerous monolith whose beliefs antagonize universal human values.

All things considered, Robinson’s tweets exemplify the polarizing effect of his discourse, particularly considering his sway over susceptible audiences, such as young people who might perceive him as an authoritative person. Robinson creates a narrative that portrays Muslim

¹⁰ Source: TellMAMA. 2013. “ Surprise, Surprise – The Tommy Robinson Rehabilitation Not Going Too Well?.” October 19. <https://tellmamauk.org/surprise-surprise-the-tommy-robinson-rehabilitation-not-going-too-well/>.

communities as inherently dangerous to British values and public safety by utilizing emotive, absolutist rhetoric and ignoring complexity and nuances. A simplistic and polarizing "us-versus-them" viewpoint is promoted by this narrative, which lacks complexity and portrays these communities as hotbeds of extremism and dissent. Robinson creates an atmosphere of fear and isolation by spreading false information that leads his supporters to view Muslim institutions as hotbeds of extremist activity rather than as diverse houses of worship.

Andrew Tate's Influence on Elementary School Students: Some Personal Observations

As an elementary school teacher who works with kids aged 10 to 14, I've seen firsthand how social media significantly shapes their values, interests, and even role models. Being in the early stages of adolescence, this age group is quite aware of internet trends. One prominent example of this effect is Andrew Tate, who has become very popular on websites like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Many of my students see him as a remarkable individual who possesses qualities, they believe to be significant and distinctive, rather than as an average public figure. Tate's blend of charisma, controversy, and confidence is what makes his image so appealing to kids, particularly when viewed through the rapid, impactful formats. However, the majority of kids in this age range only have a vague and distorted knowledge of Tate. Their understanding is mostly derived from his carefully constructed online persona rather than a thorough understanding of his life or profession outside of current social media posts. The bits and pieces people see, which are frequently compilations or short videos, portray Tate as a powerful speaker on subjects like self-control, masculinity, and achievement. His strategy, which usually consists of divisive viewpoints and unrepentant speech, appears to be intended to grab attention right away. Because these recordings are so brief, there is little opportunity for a nuanced analysis, leading to a superficial understanding that is simple to understand but frequently devoid of context.

Children's perceptions of Tate are significantly influenced by the nature of social media platforms. Short-form video material, often lasting between 30 and 60 seconds, is given priority on platforms such as YouTube Shorts and TikTok. These layouts emphasise big words, eye-catching images, and often contentious opinions in order to maximise viewer engagement and cater to rapid consumption. Children's short attention spans and preference for rapid satisfaction make this format a good fit for them. Tate's content, which is frequently distinguished by its straightforward and thought-provoking manner, flourishes in this setting and is easily readable by a younger readership that might not have the time or want to learn more.

Kids in this age range typically don't conduct in-depth investigation. Their knowledge of any topic, be it a historical figure, a scientific idea, or a celebrity like Tate, frequently depends

largely on what is readily accessible and trending. They pay attention to what is often posted on their social media feeds; therefore, Tate's online persona is ideal for this demographic. His speech, which is confident and devoid of ambiguity, conveys an air of authority, and his messages are simple to understand. The sense that Tate is someone worth listening to is reinforced by the fact that his content is regularly featured in their feeds, which lends it a certain credibility just by virtue of its prominence. Children's views and beliefs may be impacted by this strategy in both subtle and obvious ways. For instance, Tate typically addresses themes of achievement, masculinity, and independence, yet his opinions are usually expressed in extreme, absolutist terms. Such messages can be alluring to young minds that are still developing their comprehension of gender dynamics, societal roles, and personal values. They offer a simplified perspective on difficult topics, frequently presenting them in a binary manner that speaks to the simple reasoning that kids at this stage of cognitive development are prone to employ. Children may consequently start to embrace these opinions without fully comprehending the ramifications or taking into account opposing views.

The echo chamber effect that social media algorithms frequently produce is one of the main problems with this phenomenon. A child's interaction with Tate's material is interpreted by the platform's algorithms as interest after they view a video, like a post, or even just pause on a clip for a brief moment. His messages will then be further reinforced as they are likely to see more of his or comparable stuff. As a result of this constant exposure, youngsters may start to interpret Tate's thoughts as generally held beliefs or common information, which can strengthen them and make them seem even more legitimate.

Furthermore, Tate's ability to portray himself as someone who has "figured it all out" adds to the allure of his character. A person who speaks with such passion and authority gives young teenagers a reassuring sense of assurance in a world that frequently seems overwhelming and confused. Youngsters may start to respect Tate for what they see as his strength and independence since they are inherently drawn to confidence. The distinction between critical thought and passive acceptance, however, can occasionally be muddled by this adulation. For example, if Tate rejects or undervalues some points of view, kids might start to do the same, even if they don't completely comprehend why.

Few kids in this age range, in my experience, take the time to critically evaluate or fact-check the content they are exposed to. Rather, people are drawn to things that seem relatable and immediate, and Tate's character is designed to appeal to these desires. He frequently avoids the necessity for critical analysis by framing his claims in a way that makes them appear self-evident or reasonable. For instance, he frequently frames his viewpoints as universal truths rather than subjective beliefs when discussing topics such as gender roles or personal achievement. His assertions are given with a sense of finality that can make disagreement seem superfluous or even incorrect, which not only simplifies these problems but also deters people from asking questions.

Children's attraction to characters like Tate may also be heightened by their desire to blend in with their peers, particularly those who are approaching adolescence. Children may feel socially motivated to share his opinions or, at the very least, to comprehend his persona so they can have discussions about him if his content is widely shared among friends. Tate's effect transcends personal tastes and becomes a part of the larger social dynamics within peer groups because of the social component of media consumption.

Furthermore, Tate's linguistic style, which frequently consists of direct, informal, and occasionally provocative language, fits in nicely with the communication style that is common on websites that kids visit. This use of language supports the notion that Tate is someone who speaks "their language" and is not only a faraway celebrity. His relatable communication style can help his messages come across as more genuine and less like the stereotypical "adult advice" that kids in this age range are sometimes prone to reject. His strategy so positions him as a relatable figure who talks in contrast to the more measured tones they might hear from parents, teachers, or other authoritative figures, appealing to a sense of independence and rebellion that many teenagers are starting to explore.

In conclusion, children between the ages of 10 and 14 are significantly impacted by Andrew Tate's social media presence, particularly in its current form, due to a combination of variables. His persona, which is suited for attention-grabbing, short-form content, fits in perfectly with the viewing preferences of youthful audiences who are looking for content that is both socially important and quickly digestible. This impact is made worse by the algorithmic design of social media sites, which expose kids to his information over and over again, creating a vicious cycle

of interaction that could unintentionally make his opinions the standard.

Furthermore, youngsters who are just starting to understand complicated societal concerns and who might not have the critical thinking abilities to understand complex arguments will find great resonance in his words' simplicity and assurance. The resonance of Tate's messaging style, which appeals to children's developmental impulses towards emulation, social alignment, and the attractiveness of certainty, is therefore just as important as his visibility.

Without intervention or guidance, this kind of influence can shape young people's perspectives in lasting ways. Encouraging critical media literacy, providing alternative role models, and fostering open discussions about the content they consume are essential strategies to counterbalance such potent influences in a digital age where personalities like Tate have easy access to young, impressionable audiences.

(In Place of a) Conclusion: Positive Masculinity against the Toxic Manosphere

Commenting on the findings of the research by the King's College and Ipsos, Professor Rosie Campbell stated the following:

This data shows it's not just young men's attitudes that stand out. For example, young women are much more likely than any other group to think 'toxic masculinity' is a helpful term, and are most pessimistic about the prospect of future progress on gender equality (2024).

This thesis began with the awareness of the importance of addressing gender issues from multiple perspectives, acknowledging that different groups may have unique experiences and viewpoints and that there often are wide gaps between them. Engaging in open and inclusive discussions can help bridge these gaps and foster a more equitable society, since, as the case study of the mansphere representatives has shown, excluding any interested group from any discussion has profound negative impacts on an individual mental and emotional well-being and hinder social cohesion and progress.

Sharing his views about the negative impact of social media influencers on young boys in schools, Will James (2023) argues that teachers and educators should teach young students about the practices promoted by Critical Positive Masculinity Theory. Among them are collaboration, empathy, and emotional intelligence which would encourage men to openly express emotions or critically reevaluate hegemonic expectations about their behavior and define "alternative masculine norms" (Lomas, 2013, 181). Masculine identities would thus be critically redefined to become more inclusive, empathetic and cooperative and would in turn promote ideas not only of individual well-being but also of social equality. This redefinition, drawing from feminist and queer studies, as Tim Lomas further writes, would not argue that masculinity is unproblematic per se but would challenge simplistic discourses that associate masculinity with negative social trends and show masculinity in a more complex and nuanced light and, more importantly, as an integral part of many positive social developments (2013, 184).

As a teacher who has already witnessed the toxic influence of figures like Andrew Tate on young boys, I strongly support any initiative to foster healthier and more inclusive notions of

masculinity among school children. Schools, according to Wilson et al. (2022, 3-7), should foster a positive and supportive environment in which educators and personnel would receive training on what positive masculinity is and what principles it is founded upon. Through a holistic approach that would involve peers and family members, and through implementation of psychoeducational programs, boys and young men should be educated about healthy masculinity by example and provided with tools to help them express their identities positively. By implementing these strategies, schools can successfully involve boys and young men in conversations and activities that foster positive masculinity, thereby enhancing their psychosocial development and overall well-being. In light of CPMT's argument for a nuanced approach to masculinity, schools should also view both negative and positive sides of charismatic figures within communities focused on men's issues. Apart from identifying the downsides of uncritical trust in charismatic leaders, such as dependency, stifling of individual initiative, and encouragement of authoritarian and unethical behavior and deepening of social conflicts, charismatic leaders also have the ability to inspire and motivate their followers, fostering a sense of purpose, community, and positive engagement. They excel at effective communication, making complex ideas accessible and acting as catalysts for positive change. More importantly, however, since the manosphere is appealing primarily to disaffected men, who are economically disadvantaged and socially alienated, addressing the issue of toxic masculinity and other manosphere-related phenomena goes beyond the school premises and requires a more comprehensive narrative that would challenge the existing order of things and a whole range of disparities it has created.

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