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Inspiration, advocate, hypocrite or predator? Young men's diverse views of Andrew Tate

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ABSTRACT

Although there is increasing public concern about patriarchal influencers' harmful impacts, young men's own voices have been largely absent from these discussions. Focus group interviews with 117 young men aged 16–21 years in Australia find that young men show diverse responses to Andrew Tate, giving cause for both hope and concern. Some young men see Tate as a source of inspiration for self-improvement in fitness or finances. Some see him as a legitimate advocate for men in the context of male marginalization or defend him against media misrepresentation. Some emphasize influencers' inauthenticity and exploitation of social media or simply were not interested in them. Some were more critical, denouncing Tate's sexism, hypocritical and criminal behaviour, or negative impacts on more impressionable boys. Efforts to engage boys and young men in gender-equitable responses to manfluencers should be informed by the evidence of the complexity and diversity in their responses to manfluencers' narratives.

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There is widespread community concern about the impact of male supremacist influencers on boys and young men, yet there has been little examination of what boys and young men themselves think of such influencers. Young men's voices have been largely absent from debates over social media, online spaces and influencers, despite media and policy attention to the harms they may perpetrate or suffer. Giving voice to young men's own understandings of practices and settings perceived as problematic is a desirable element in contemporary scholarship on young men and masculinities (Ravn and Roberts 2019, 186). This paper reports on a study among young men aged 16–21 years in Australia, exploring their views and experiences of the online world. It focuses on young men's views of one of the most prominent pro-patriarchal influencers, Andrew Tate, a topic that arose spontaneously as young men discussed their experiences online, good and bad.

Boys' and young men's formation of gendered identities and relations is structured both by formal learning – in schools and other settings – and by informal learning

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through families, peers, media and other processes. A particular version of manhood, often tied to men's dominance over women and the dominance of some men over other men, is privileged and culturally exalted in many settings (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). This 'hegemonic masculinity' operates as a social benchmark that is learned and policed. While most boys may not personally endorse its ideals, most also perceive a societal pressure to live up to them, as Australian research finds (Flood 2024). Most boys do not fully embody the hegemonic ideal, but must position themselves in relation to it, whether through complicity, negotiation or resistance. The formation of boys' gendered identities and practices is achieved in part through interpersonal work, including the use of available cultural resources (Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman 2002) such as social media.

There is growing community and public policy concern in countries such as Australia about boys' and young men's formation of patriarchal masculinities, their radicalization into misogynistic extremism and their perpetration of violence against women and girls. One important focus of such concerns is the impact of influencers who use social media platforms to promote pro-patriarchal ideologies of gender. The development and mainstreaming of online anti-feminist networks and communities or the 'manosphere' has included the emergence of sexist and misogynist influencers, and the most prominent of these is Andrew Tate (Roberts et al. 2025). Tate, a former professional kick boxer and Big Brother contestant, is a widely circulated media influencer. Notorious for his promotion of misogynist and other controversial views, Tate also faces legal investigations in the US, UK and Romania for alleged rape, sexual assault and human trafficking.

Young men's interactions with Tate and other 'manfluencers' – male social media influencers who post material that promotes sexism and stereotypical masculine norms – are likely to be one means through which they form gendered identities, attitudes and practices. There are four reasons for this. Firstly, some studies find that social media based on stereotyped or inequitable themes can reinforce such norms among users, although the evidence is mixed (Koester and Marcus 2024; Turel 2024). Secondly, a small body of research on the impact of influencers in particular finds that they can have effects on political attitudes and behaviours (Renström and Bäck 2024). Thirdly, recent research has documented associations between the number of 'manfluencers' men follow and their misogynistic attitudes (as measured by agreement with statements based on the dehumanization of women) (Renström and Bäck 2024). Fourthly, there is evidence that exposure to manfluencer content intensifies men's misogynistic attitudes. In studies manipulating young men's exposure to fictional manfluencer content, young men exposed to such content adopted more misogynistic attitudes compared to a control group (Renström and Bäck 2024).

At the same time, this paper takes as given that young men's negotiations and performances of gender are shaped by a variety of interactional and structural factors, not merely their encounters with social media. Pre-existing, 'offline' gendered relations and norms shape the kinds of platforms young people frequent and the content they consume (Cala et al. 2025). Moreover, young men can be critical consumers of online content rather than merely passive recipients. Young men may show critical awareness of the algorithms shaping their online experiences and the proliferation of misinformation and may carefully manage their own engagements with social media (Keddie and Flood 2025; Koester and Marcus 2024; Pangrazio 2016).

How young men view gender

Young men's views of Andrew Tate and other 'manfluencers' exist in the context of their views of gender roles and relations more generally.

Young men's attitudes towards gender

Quantitative research highlights three patterns in understandings of gender among young men in Australia. Firstly, there is a significant gap between men's and women's attitudes towards gender equality in general and various gender issues in particular. Men's attitudes to gender are consistently less progressive than women's (Flood 2015). Both Australian and international studies document that men are less supportive than women of principles of gender equality (Evans et al. 2018), less likely to see sexism against women as extensive and systematic (Evans et al. 2018; Jones et al. 2018; Webster et al. 2018), and more likely to endorse male dominance: in workplaces, politics, and in relationships and families (Coumarelos, Weeks, et al., 2023b; Harris et al. 2015; Webster et al. 2018). This gender gap is visible among young people as well. Recent national survey data in Australia shows that young men aged 16–24 years are more likely than young women aged 16–24 years to agree with statements endorsing patriarchal inequality (Coumarelos, Roberts, et al., 2023a, 175–177).

Secondly, most young men in Australia do not hold explicitly pro-patriarchal attitudes. Among 16–24 years old males, most disagree with statements endorsing patriarchal inequalities: that 'Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the workplace in Australia' (88% disagree), 'Men, rather than women, should hold positions of responsibility in the community' (80% disagree), 'In the workplace, men generally make more capable bosses than women' (79% disagree), and 'Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household' (78% disagree) (Coumarelos, Roberts, et al., 2023a, 175–177).

The obverse of this point is that a sizable minority of young men hold pro-patriarchal attitudes. Over one-third of young adult men aged 18–30 years have attitudes that deny the extent of gender inequalities and express resentment towards women. They agree that 'Many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia' (39%), 'Many women mistakenly interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist' (35%), and 'Many women don't fully appreciate all that men do for them' (35%) (Flood 2024). There may be two-way relationships between young men's endorsement of such claims and the sympathies for Andrew Tate's anti-feminist messaging, this paper documents below. The young men who agree with such claims may be the same young men who see Tate as a courageous voice for disempowered men.

Thirdly, although young men's support for gender inequality is significantly lower than that of young women, there is little evidence that this has worsened over recent years in Australia. In fact, among young people, overall attitudes towards gender equality have improved over the past decade or so, since 2013. This includes improvements in young people's rejection of attitudes that deny women's experiences of inequality, normalize sexism and reinforce rigid gender roles and stereotypes (Coumarelos, Roberts, et al., 2023a, 63–64).

This data does not provide a gender-disaggregated assessment of whether *both* young men's and young women's attitudes have improved. However, data at least on young men's and women's voting behaviour suggests that, in contrast to some other countries, young men in Australia overall are *not* moving to the right politically. Millennial and Gen Z men (born respectively over 1980–1994 and after 1994) are more conservative than their female counterparts but are more progressive than men of previous generations at the same stage of life (Chowdhury 2024). In contrast, in some other countries, while young women are moving to the left, young men are either standing still or moving right. In Australia, electoral data from 1996 to 2022 shows that both young men and young women are shifting towards the political left, although young men are doing so more slowly (Chowdhury 2024).

Other data, more focused on gender, suggest that young men's views of gender roles and relations have largely remained steady in recent years (The Men's Project & Flood, 2018, 2020, 2024). Conducted in 2018 and 2023 in Australia among young men aged 18–30 years, the Man Box surveys find that most young men do not endorse a model of traditional masculinity based on being tough, stoic, dominant over women and homophobic, suggesting that healthier, more gender-equitable and more inclusive norms of manhood are more common (Flood 2024). At the same time, anywhere from one-quarter to one-third of young men endorse rigid, dangerous or sexist models of manhood, and this endorsement has largely been steady over the five years since 2018 (Flood 2024). In addition, at least from some anecdotal reports, it is possible that there has been a spike in a particular kind of sexualized misogyny among boys and young men, prompted perhaps by pervasive exposure to sexist pornography, misogynist influencers or other factors.

Young men's views of Andrew Tate

We move now from the question of young men's general views of gender to their views of the popular influencer Andrew Tate. Andrew Tate and other 'manfluencers' are a ubiquitous aspect of young men's online experiences, as three quantitative surveys document. Ninety-two percent of young men in Australia knew of Andrew Tate (The Man Cave, 2023), 80% of boys in the UK aged between 16 and 17 had either read, listened to or watched content from Andrew Tate (Hope Not Hate 2023) and 60% of UK boys aged 6–15, including 84% of boys aged 13–15, have heard of Tate (Smith 2023b).

Substantial proportions of boys and young men have positive views of Andrew Tate and/or his online content. In an Australian poll among 1,374 young men in late 2022, 35% agreed that he was relatable, and 33% were neutral, and 25% agreed that they looked up to Tate as a role model, and 31% were neutral (The Man Cave, 2023). In a UK poll in 2023 of people aged 16–24 years, 45% of males had a positive view of Tate and 26% held a negative opinion of the influencer (Hope Not Hate 2023). Among 16–17 years olds, only 1% of female respondents shared a positive view of Tate; 82% had a negative view. But among male respondents, 52% shared a positive view, with only 19% holding a negative view (Hope Not Hate 2023). In a second UK survey, one in six 6–15 years old boys (17%) had a positive opinion of Andrew Tate, including 23% of 13–15 years olds (Smith 2023b). In a third UK survey, among British adults who had heard of Tate, only 6% had a positive view of him, but 12% of men, and 27% of 18–29

year old men, had a positive opinion of him (Smith 2023a). In a fourth UK survey among 16–25 years olds, one in three (32%) young men said they have a positive view of Tate, compared to just one in 11 (9%) of young women (Hanson 2023).

Simplistically, one might conclude from these positive views of Tate that many boys and young men share an enthusiastic endorsement of Tate’s misogynist ideologies and behaviours. This would be a mistake. Our qualitative research among young men in Australia documents that men’s appreciation for Tate centres as much on his contributions to self-improvement and financial skill as it does on his pro-patriarchal teachings. That is, listening to young men themselves highlights greater diversity and complexity in their relationships to pro-patriarchal influencers such as Andrew Tate. What did this research involve?

Methods

The research project on which this paper draws involved a qualitative study of 117 young men, aged 16–21, from diverse backgrounds in Australia, based on 25 online focus groups. All of the participants identified as men. All were fluent in English, and a little over half identified as Anglo-Australian. Forty-nine were from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and four identified as First Nations. Fourteen were identified as having a disability. Further demographic details of the sample are given in Table 1. The research was funded by the eSafety Commission (Australia), Australia’s independent regulator for online safety.

The research comprised an open-ended discussion of young men’s online experiences. It sought to explore the role that the online world plays in the lives of young men and boys, key influences driving young men and boys’ online identities and behaviours, motivations for young men’s and boys’ online behaviours, and the conditions in which young men and boys feel good, accepted, connected or purposeful online (Keddie and Flood 2025).

All of the young men were allocated pseudonyms and a nomenclature to denote specific demographic factors in brackets, using the following:

- Age = number, e.g. 19
- Sexuality = S for Straight; G for Gay; B for Bisexual; Ax for Asexual; Q for Queer; U for Unsure/ Questioning
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background = CALD
- First Nations Status = First Nations
- Disability Status = D for Disability

Table 1. Demographic details of participants.

Age	%	Sexual identity	%	Employment	%
16	18	Straight	77	Students	79
17	11	Gay	8	Working part- or full-time	17
18	19	Bisexual	9	Self-employed	1
19	19	Queer	2	Unemployed	3
20	19	Asexual	1		
21	15	Unsure/questioning	2		
		Prefer not to say	2		

For example, if a quote is attributed to 'Jaden (19, G, CALD)', this tells the reader that Jaden is 19, identifies as gay, and is from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse or CALD background.

Participant recruitment was supported by The Human Network Market Research Service. The research received ethical clearance from Deakin University. Participants under 18 received permission to participate in the study from their parents/guardians.

To ensure that the questions, interview style and language for the interviews were as relevant to the young men as possible, the research team recruited and consulted four youth researchers from the Centre for Multicultural Youth (Victoria, Australia). These youth researchers participated in an initial in-person workshop with the research team and a member of the eSafety team to develop focus group questions and prompts reflecting the key research questions. Two of the male youth researchers went on to carry out all of the focus group and individual interviews, in collaboration with members of the research team.

The focus group interviews typically took around two hours. Participants were grouped according to age: the young men aged 16–18 years were grouped together, while the young men aged 19–21 were grouped together. The interviews involved a series of open-ended questions about young men's experiences online. All interviews were recorded and transcribed via Zoom.

The data were analysed for this paper in feminist-informed ways to foreground how the young men's engagements with Tate either reproduced narrow and restrictive ideas and enactments of gender and masculinity or challenged these ideas and enactments. Through this lens, six key themes emerged. In relation to the reproduction of gendered ideas, young men's affirmations of Tate's messaging were evident in themes of using Tate's content to build muscles and money, the defence of Tate as a misrepresented man, and support for Tate as a voice for men. In relation to the challenge of gendered ideas, young men's critique or rejection of Tate and his messaging was evident in themes of Tate as fake, inflammatory or narrow, Tate as stupid, sexist and criminal, and Tate as harmful to younger boys. The following sections examine these themes before exploring their wider significance.

Results: young men's responses to Tate

Although the focus groups with boys and young men in this research project did not involve asking them about Andrew Tate and his peers, Tate came up spontaneously in every group and was a key topic of conversation. He was viewed, however, in diverse and nuanced ways, as the findings below show.

Our focus groups among young men aged 16–21 years in Australia corroborate earlier quantitative research, finding that the vast majority of young men are aware of Andrew Tate, many consume his content, and substantial proportions have at least some positive views of Tate or his online content.

The qualitative character of our data allows exploration, however, of *what* boys and young men find positive about Tate and Tate's content. The focus group discussions showed that responses to Tate among young men are diverse and ambivalent, and there is more support for Tate's contributions to self-improvement and financial acumen than for his pro-patriarchal and anti-feminist teachings. While many of the

young men cited Andrew Tate as a source of personal inspiration, this was more often his narratives of and contributions to self-improvement and far less often his misogynist ideologies and guidance regarding the treatment of women.

Building muscles and money

The goal of self-improvement is an important motivation for young men's engagement in online spaces, this research finds. Many of the focus group participants reported actively seeking out content to 'better themselves' or 'be the best version of themselves', including materials associated with maximizing physical fitness, body image and personal finances. Influencers – individuals on social media with social influence – were seen by many of the young men as an important source of self-improvement and inspiration. Maxie (21, S, CALD) offered praise for influencers: 'some of the values that they do try and impart like basic discipline, trying to be what a man should be, I would say that is actually slightly good'. Majak (21, S, CALD) agreed, referring to content by Kobe Bryant, an American former professional basketball player, as supporting him to learn 'a lot of practical, real-world solutions to issues and problems' he faced during Covid lockdown.

Tate's role as an inspiration for self-improvement is the first theme evident in young men's accounts of this influencer. Andrew Tate was identified by several young men as a positive influence on their sense of self. Manny (18, S) said, 'I haven't watched heaps of [Andrew Tate's] stuff, but like, from what I've seen, [he] has inspired me in setting ways to just become a better person all around'. Drew (16, S, D, CALD) said, 'I haven't watched like every single video that he has, but, like the occasional few, has given me maybe a bit more confidence.' Warren (18, S) too described Tate as inspiring self-improvement: 'I'm quite supportive of lots of things [Tate says] ... Just being the best version of yourself is stuff that I've started to live by'.

Young men's narratives of using online content for self-improvement included a focus on improving their physical strength, muscularity, and stamina. They referenced various influencers here as sources of inspiration, including Tate but also, e.g., retired United States Navy SEAL and ultramarathon runner David Goggins. Goggins was viewed as inspiring ongoing involvement in physical activity, as Kenneth (21, S) explained:

David Goggins is a guy that I listen to when I'm running a fair bit as well, because that man is a freak ... it's those sort of guys ... that I listen to that have some sort of way of putting into practice every single day and finding motivation every single day in repetition that I'm like, yeah, that's something I want to get into. (Kenneth, 21, S)

For another young man, online information on 'looksmxing' – on how to maximize one's physical appearance or looks for personal gain – was an important form of self-improvement, including after experiencing relationship rejection:

It's a funny story. I got a bad haircut, and my crush rejected me, so I was like, what the hell, you know ... am I [not] desirable or something? I did a bit of research on like, okay, how do I, you know, make myself better? ... I stumbled across where they had like a lot of new terms that I've never heard of like looksmxing and all of that. It's getting really popular nowadays, but it's about, you know, how can I make myself better? And then I was like showing the standards that you have to fit to [...] just the casual things: hitting the gym more, doing more exercise and feeling good about myself. (Bairam, 18, S, CALD)

Young men's narratives of using the internet for self-improvement also focused on developing financial skills and financial success and, again, Andrew Tate was referenced by several young men as a source of inspiration and guidance. Drew (16, S, D, CALD) commented that, '[Tate] can motivate men. He encourages people to try and make money [and] all that.' Derek (20, S, CALD) noted that, 'a few things that I did get from Tate, making money, as a lot of us did and that got me interested in personal finance'. Brenton (21, S) and Warren (18, S) too commented on Tate's inspiration for their financial acumen and accumulation of capital:

I've got a couple of small businesses and like the amount of information that I've got from [Andrew Tate] ... there's just genuinely like amazing knowledge to have ... he's got a bunch of good ideas. (Brenton, 21, S)

... since I started following him. I've made probably three times more money than I did before. I'm in the best physical shape I've been in my entire life and I just kind of have a better perception of the world. (Warren, 18, S)

So far, these forms of support for Andrew Tate among young men do not symbolize a focused endorsement of his gender politics, that is, his views about women and feminism and his behaviour towards women. Instead, they embody support for Tate's views of physical health and financial success. It is possible that drawing on elements of Tate's content on self-improvement may have positive impacts among young men, fostering exercise, physical health, and financial responsibility and security. Similarly, other UK research among boys aged 6–15 years finds that Tate's views on women are less appealing than his views on work, success and masculinity: only 12% of boys said they agree with Tate's views on women, compared to 17% for his views on masculinity and what it means to be a man, and 20% for his views on work and success (Smith 2023b).

Young men's accounts here do, nevertheless, show affiliations with stereotypical and rigid ideals of masculinity, including the primacy of physical strength, muscularity, sexual prowess and material wealth (Roberts et al. 2025). Tate has been described as playing on boys' and young men's fears about their achievement of the trappings of stereotypical masculinity, including financial and sexual success (Haslop et al. 2024), and the young men's accounts in this study suggest that some do see Tate as offering solutions here.

Young men's emphases on self-improvement can also be seen as aspiring to a version of masculinity termed the 'secular monk': deliberately solitary, rigorously self-disciplined, and dedicated to personal optimization and self-sufficiency (Taggart 2020). The secular monk, rather than forming deep interpersonal relationships, focuses on a daily routine of solitary activities intended to enhance his physical health, mental clarity, and financial success. Although this formation of masculinity reflects longstanding emphases in stereotypical masculinity on independence, it also reflects new and broader societal trends towards increased individualism and reduced social engagement.

A misrepresented man

Young men in this study also commented that Andrew Tate has been subject to unfair negative misrepresentation, defending him against this. This second theme embodies a

more explicit tolerance for Tate's views about gender, a sense that he is 'not as bad as people say'. Manny (18, S), for example, commented that media agencies actively misrepresent Tate's views as 'extremely negative', painting Tate in a 'bad light' as 'misogynistic', taking his views 'out of context'. Jordan (16, S) too stated that the media focuses on the negative aspects of Tate's content, ignoring his positive content on personal development, as he explained: 'I don't, I don't really think I've ever heard anything positive in like the mainstream media about him'.

Another common line of commentary, which is less endorsing of Tate's views but still softening a critique of them, also focuses on the claim that he is misrepresented, attributing this to the general dynamics of the online world, where people's circulation of particularly controversial segments of media content fuels misrepresentation or influencers themselves court controversy to generate views and engagement. As Isaiah (21, S, CALD) commented:

[Tate] is very controversial again, but then what happens is they'll take that one clip from him, that particular controversial line and then they'll extrapolate from him, that particular controversial line, and then they'll extrapolate it to something very big. And then, the polarisation happens from there like guys and girls are divided. (Isaiah, 21, S, CALD)

While social media influencers use a variety of strategies to engage followers (Lou and Zhou 2024), one used by a minority of influencers is to post deliberately controversial content in the hope that it will attract attention, thus leveraging 'outrage culture' for attention and followers (Lok 2019). As these young men report, Tate's more controversial posts may reflect this strategy. Some young men emphasized that Tate exploits his notoriety and status as a misogynist and polarizing figure for financial gain – as a ploy to generate clicks, views, and revenue. Tariq (19, S) commented:

I mean it is kind of in [Tate's] best interest to be controversial because the way the world we're kind of living in, the greatest kind of asset you can have is attention right? So, by [being] all controversial and saying things that usually people don't say, you will stir up the pot, you will get lots of views, likes, comments. ... Tate's not just doing this for fun. I mean, he has something to sell his audience. So of course, he's gonna be controversial, get people on. And eventually get more sales. (Tariq, 19, S)

Similarly, Cedric (18, S) stated that, 'yeah, I find he says things to grab people's attention. And like he'll say something outrageous. It'll get the news on him. It'll get all the attention.' Henry (16, S) proposed that Tate states controversial views to 'get reactions' and thus to make money, stating, 'he also knows that when people are getting mad and criticizing him, he's making money for that'. These young men thus offer some level of critique of Tate's and others' monetization of polarizing narratives online.

Voice for men

A third theme in young men's views of Andrew Tate represents a far stronger endorsement of his gender politics: that Tate is a valuable voice for men and male empowerment. One focus group participant, for example, emphasized that Tate makes points about gender relations that have otherwise been unsaid or silenced:

I've watched a lot of this stuff and ... I agree with most of it. [...] this ... guy's putting out so many opinions of things that haven't been said in ages because of feminist movements and

everything ... he's the only one speaking out about this sort of male stuff that's not spoken about. (Brenton, 21, S)

For several of the young men, the negative and hostile misrepresentation of Tate referred to earlier reflects a general censoring and silencing of men within online and offline spaces. Tariq (19, S) referred to Tate as boldly saying what others have been unable to say in a climate of media censorship:

No one else has been saying this. Everyone else has been silenced. So, when you see all these, when you, when all these different platforms that have a, that kind of, let's say control the media. ... they see this bold guy just changing the course of the entire internet right, everyone's starting to put their attention on these things now and the narrative that Tate is playing is a different narrative to what these companies probably want. (Tariq, 19, S)

The notion that men now are being censored and silenced, and indeed that 'it is getting difficult to be a straight white man', has increasing currency in some online forums (Hanson 2023), and some of the young men in our study echo this.

Indeed, some young men in our study who viewed Tate positively also reported self-censoring views similar to his in their interactions with others because of their awareness that these views would be unwelcome. As Warren (18, S) reported, 'in normal life especially, kind of where I have to shut my mouth, because I'm quite supportive of lots of things [he says]'.

Some of the young men viewed Andrew Tate as a legitimate advocate for male empowerment, in a context where female empowerment has been too much the focus, and males now, according to Brenton (21, S), have 'no chance' for empowerment. Jase agreed:

[Andrew Tate is] try[ing] to instil traditional human male masculinity into today's generation of men ... he protects his partner, you know, all the good stuff as well ... but in terms of the whole equality thing, I think, the whole social movement has gotten a little extreme and it's essentially the women's empowerment movement, they're trying to not exactly replace us, but kind of. (Jase, 20, S, CALD)

Some of the young men commented that Tate's male empowerment message was particularly important in a context where young men have few positive role models, and there has been a 'large focus away from masculinity', as Nico (18, S, D, CALD) articulated:

There aren't many, you know, strong male kind of role models for younger, for younger men growing up, you see, you know, like feminism is getting ... like popular and stuff. It's getting quite strong [...] that's cool. That's very cool. I, you know, you love to see that stuff. However, you see, like there's been a large focus away from like masculinity and stuff. And I think Andrew Tate, he plays an important role in reminding us, you know, what we should try [to strive] towards.

Some young men's support for Tate is framed here in terms of admiration for a man who 'stands up for what he believes in' – as embodying, in other words, stereotypical masculine norms of courage and principle. This echoes the views of 13–14 years old boys in a UK study who praised Tate for standing up for his beliefs in an authentic way (Haslop et al. 2024). However, given the data presented above, some young men's support for Tate also reflects a more politicized and anti-feminist endorsement of Tate's claims that men are now increasingly disadvantaged relative to women and gender equality and inclusivity agendas are unfair to men (Haslop et al. 2024).

Having canvassed themes in young men's positive responses to Andrew Tate, what about their negative responses?

Fake, inflammatory or narrow

For a small number of men, influencers *per se* are of little interest. As Dev (19, S, CALD) commented,

I basically don't like, follow influencers. I think most 99 percent of them are fake ... just do it to get payment, recognition ... it makes me think, these idiots are just wasting their life trying to follow, somebody like, non-genuine.

A few young men simply stated their dislike for or discomfort with Andrew Tate or his views but without much commentary on the bases for this. Kyle (18, S, CALD) said, 'he can make some good points, but you know he also makes a lot of really bad choices ... a lot of people are really against him and, you know, I am also one of the people that don't really like him'. Felix (20, B) described his discomfort at the inflammatory online content produced by some influencers:

specific people and personalities so, influencers who are, you know, whether it just be the way they are or if they're acting for their online persona. Kind of stir shit [make trouble for other people or drama] and act out and say outrageous things to get attention. People like Andrew Tate, perfect example, just like the things that he says makes me so uncomfortable. It's just gross and it's for attention and it gets, and it gets the attention of the media. (Felix, 20, B)

A couple of young men offered criticisms of male influencers' narrow focus on physical outcomes and financial success, noting their neglect of emotional wellbeing and other dimensions of a good life. For example, Felix (20, B) commented:

[Male influencers] just don't necessarily represent what being a man is all about like, it doesn't actually necessarily represent what you should be striving to be as a person, you know, like it's not promoting emotional kind of sensitivity or an understanding of like, you know, your mental health. A lot of it focuses on, you know, physical outcomes, monetary outcomes. It's very objective. And those are all things that are fine. But they don't necessarily promote, like, a life that will be enjoyable to live. (Felix, 20, B)

Stupid, sexist and criminal

The strongest theme in young men's negative responses to Andrew Tate was a feminist-informed critique of his views on women and gender and his behaviour towards women.

Several young men, drawing on feminist and ethical discourses, criticized Tate's commentary and his hypocritical, unethical and (reportedly) criminal behaviour. Tristan (18, S), for example, emphasized his disagreement with Tate's 'stupid' claim that men are better than women:

I'd say he could be pretty far out there like, I think I remember seeing a clip of him saying, like men are better than women. I do think they should be equal, because I can see sometimes that men treat women unequally, and I don't see why, we're all people and I've seen many clips have been saying that they are better than women ... I think it's just a bit like stupid. (Tristan, 18, S)

Another young man, Lionel (20, S), was scathing about Tate. In a long critique, he emphasized the contradictions between Tate's words and his actions: 'he really wants to be a loving father and he really respects the women in his life, but [he] also runs a freaking [human] trafficking ring', 'he's going on about how he doesn't own anybody, but he's getting arrested for literally owning and stealing money off of webcam models', he 'switch[ed] from being Christian [to Muslim]. Proclaiming a lot of Christian values to being a Muslim very quickly. What does that say?' Jase (20, S, CALD) too was deeply critical of Tate, highlighting Tate's justifications for cheating on his partners as 'not cheating' but 'exercise', his focus on 'how much money he's got and how many girls he's been with' and his alleged trafficking. As such, Jase noted, 'I don't really wanna consume his content.'

These men's feminist-informed critiques of Tate are echoed in quantitative data among boys and young men. For example, among 16–25 years old males in the UK, most young men saw Tate as sexist (58%) and a misogynist (56%), as did 83% and 75% respectively of young women (Hanson 2023).

Harmful to younger boys

Several of the young men expressed concern about the negative impact Tate was having on younger, more impressionable boys and young men. This is a variation on the accounts above: still critical of Tate and his views, but focused on the harms these may present for *other*, younger males. This is an instance of the 'third-person effect' well documented in scholarship on media, the tendency for people to see others as considerably more influenced by media messages than they are themselves (Tsay-Vogel 2020).

Young men emphasized that younger males are more naïve and easily influenced than older males, and thus more vulnerable to negative influences from commentators such as Tate. Geoffrey (20, G, CALD) stated, for example, 'I think it's super concerning where like especially younger guys are going ... the concerning part is that they're naïve.' Vincent (21, S) suggested that Tate is adept at being an influential male role model for impressionable boys and young men who lack these:

it definitely like targets, like 13 year-olds who like they're growing up on the internet ... they're figuring, like, what does it mean to be a man? And then there's this guy who's really very cool. He's like, you know, destroying all the feminists, or he goes on a podcast. He's really cool ... he was kinda smart because he was like taking advantage of all these impressionable young people who may [need] another male role model in their life. ... I definitely get why people get sucked into it. (Vincent, 21, S)

Before moving to reflections on the wider significance of young men's views of Andrew Tate, there are two complexities to note. First, there are variations in the ideological content of Tate's materials. While his short video clips foreground themes of overt anti-feminism and misogyny, this is only a fraction of his overall content. Such themes are less overt in his longer-form written content, although it still naturalizes patriarchal domination and gender hierarchies (Roberts et al. 2025). Second, there is an intersection between people's endorsement of Tate's media material and people's beliefs about the content of this material. A UK study found significant differences in perceptions of what Tate's beliefs and messages actually are – whether Tate believes, for example,

that it can be women's fault if they are raped or that it is a husband's duty to protect and provide for his wife – among those who report agreeing or disagreeing with his views (Smith 2023a).

Discussion

This research among young men aged 16–21 years in Australia finds a continuum in views of Andrew Tate, from anti-feminist support for Tate as a vital voice for men in the context of male disempowerment to pro-feminist critique of Tate as a sexist, hypocritical criminal. Andrew Tate looms large in young men's perceptions of the online world, with most knowing of him and his content and substantial proportions seeing aspects at least of his content as valuable. To the extent that these young men take any position on Andrew Tate, the most common one is to see Tate as a valuable source of guidance on self-improvement in relation to domains including bodily strength and muscularity and financial skill. Such young men seem relatively uncritical in their (selective) consumption of Tate's content, either turning a blind eye to his more explicitly sexist teachings or assuming that his misogyny has been exaggerated or is performative rather than heartfelt. Young men's accounts of Tate as an inspiration for self-improvement largely take for granted the value of the stereotypically masculine qualities Tate celebrates and purports to embody. Some young men offer more explicitly anti-feminist narratives, seeing Tate as unfairly maligned by hostile media misrepresentation or as a brave and authentic voice for the plight of men and boys. Others, on the other hand, dismiss Tate alongside other influencers as inauthentic or deliberately provocative, express concern about Tate's negative impacts among younger boys, or, most critically of all, espouse pro-feminist critiques of his sexist teachings and abusive and (allegedly) criminal behaviour.

This diversity in young men's views of a prominent and patriarchal social influencer is unsurprising given what is known about young men's ideological positions on gender more generally. Young men's general support for general norms of gender equality explains the absence of a widespread and enthusiastic endorsement of Tate's pro-patriarchal views and behaviour among the young men in our study. However, young men do seem far more prepared to draw on Tate for their aspirations to self-improvement; they largely take for granted the stereotypically masculine aims of this version of self-optimisation, and in drawing on Tate's teachings about health and finances, they risk condoning his more unsavoury teachings as well.

Among the young men who are the primary audience for Andrew Tate's media content, pro-patriarchal views already have significant, albeit minority, support. Tate did not invent sexism. His views fall on fertile ground to some extent, given longstanding patriarchal gender norms and behaviours among boys and men. This is reflected in the narratives of the young men in this study, of Tate as the noble victim of demonizing media misrepresentations or even as a valiant spokesman for men, the newly downtrodden. Tate's content, however, is likely to maintain and intensify patriarchal ideologies among men, boys and others.

The impacts of media content are mediated by what users bring to their engagement with this content. Young men with gender-equitable attitudes are more likely than other young men to resist and reject patriarchal media content, while young men with gender-inequitable attitudes are more likely to seek out and to be persuaded by it. Thus, there are

likely to be circular relationships between young men's pro-patriarchal attitudes and behaviours and their use of pro-patriarchal social media content (Koester and Marcus 2024). Moreover, media users may interpret the same content in diverse ways, based on their pre-existing views and experiences of gender roles and relations (Cala et al. 2025).

The ambivalence in some young men's responses to Andrew Tate may reflect what other research has described as young men's shifting negotiations between progressive and traditional or more patriarchal expressions of masculinity (Elliott 2019). In a qualitative Australian study among young men aged 20–29 years, the men both distanced themselves from and recuperated hegemonic masculinity, asserting progressive positions while also demonstrating more patriarchal attitudes and behaviours (Elliott 2019). Similarly, other studies document that men may emphasize progressive attitudes and identities while also enacting traditionally masculine behaviours and attitudes (Jóhannsdóttir and Gíslason 2018; Schmitz and Haltom 2017). There was little sign in our research of what has been called 'hybrid masculinities', in which men with various forms of social privilege not only distance themselves from masculinities that have been subject to sustained feminist critique but borrow strategically from the styles and identities associated with marginalized and subordinated masculinities (Bridges and Pascoe 2014, 246), although the study's reliance on online focus groups may have made this less apparent. On the other hand, the study did find what the 'hybrid masculinities' research also illuminates: an apparent softening of or distancing from patriarchal masculinities without much significant challenge to gender inequalities.

One limitation of this study is that, although the pool of focus group participants was diverse, there was no scope to explore how young men's intersecting experiences of gender, sexuality, race, class, disability and more might relate to their online experiences, including their responses to Andrew Tate. This absence is true of much of the literature on social media, young men, and masculinity (Cala et al. 2025). An intersectional lens is desirable, though, as Tate's emphases on financial hustle, physical dominance, and male entitlement are likely to appeal differently to boys and young men based on ethnicity, class, sexuality, and other factors. For example, a UK survey among 16–25 years olds found that heterosexual and ethnic minority youth were more likely than their LGB+ and White peers to have a positive view of Tate (Hanson 2023). Ethnic minority young men, facing racism and structural marginalization, may embrace Tate's anti-victim narrative more than white peers, while heterosexual men may align more with his homophobic and misogynistic scripts. For young men navigating lowpaid work or unemployment, Tate's emphasis on financial independence and 'hustle culture' may feel like a route out of precarity, even when those pathways are illusory or exploitative. More widely, there are differences in young people's engagements with social media in different geographic and cultural contexts that deserve attention (Cala et al. 2025). A second potential limitation is that young men's accounts in the focus groups may have been shaped by social desirability bias, with some perhaps downplaying their support for Tate's more explicitly anti-feminist messaging, although this study certainly does find young men who cheerlead for this.

The narratives of self-improvement in Andrew Tate's and other patriarchal influencers' content may make it particularly seductive to young men. Such influencers are popular for a variety of reasons: they offer sexist and misogynist ideals that are also common among

substantial minorities of men (and women); they tap into the sense of aggrieved entitlement evident among some boys and men; they make effective use of marketing and social media strategies; and they are enabled by social and economic insecurities. However, male supremacist influencers also offer a vision of self-improvement, speaking to widespread concerns and anxieties among boys and men and appealing to boys' and men's aspirations (Ging 2024). They produce content designed to incite fear, desire and hope among their audiences, mobilizing males' affective responses and investments in homosocial status to inspire engagement (Haslop et al. 2024). They offer lonely, struggling, or insecure boys and men the promise that they will be able to fulfil common tenets of traditional masculinity, including sexual and financial potency.

The qualitative research reported here finds that self-improvement is a significant focus of young men's positive responses to Andrew Tate. It is troubling, then, that the vision of self-improvement in manfluencers' content is deeply impoverished: disconnected from emotion and community, highly individualistic, shallow, and devoid of empathy, vulnerability, or generosity (Ging 2024). It will do little to ease male vulnerability and discontent. Even worse, these narratives of self-improvement function as a Trojan horse to smuggle in more sinister patriarchal, heterosexist, and reactionary agendas (Ging 2024).

There is certainly cause for concern given what some of the young men in this study themselves say about Andrew Tate and his ilk. In addition, Tate hardly should be our only concern. Although his influence may be declining, there is both an emerging pro-patriarchal social media ecosystem (Haslop and Ringrose 2025) and, alongside this, a range of other influencers popular among boys and young men who do not explicitly focus on masculinity and yet also reinforce sexist gender hierarchies and norms (Cala et al. 2025). At the same time, given the wider patterns of young men's views of gender relations and the voices of other men in this study, many young men are likely to be critical of influencers' more patriarchal teachings, at least to some degree. To paraphrase some of the young men in this study, many may be more inclined to see Tate, for example, as a 'sexist criminal' rather than a guru or role model.

Whether we are optimistic or pessimistic about young men's engagement with patriarchal influencers and their potential repercussions, it is vital to listen to young men's own voices as part of this work. This is important not only to gauge the extent to which young men's attitudes and behaviours are shifting in patriarchal or gender-equitable directions, but also to investigate the sources of young men's use of and support for manfluencers, and most importantly, to find resources with which to mobilize positive personal and social change. Some young men already resist patriarchal influencers' messaging, some are ambivalent, and yes, some are cheerleaders. Working with and engaging this diversity among young men is essential.

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