

## Parent Factsheet

# Influencers, Misogyny and Toxic Masculinity

### Andrew Tate



In the latter half of 2022, and especially in January 2023, the controversial British-American online influencer Andrew Tate has been reported on by various news agencies.

Tate is a British-American former kickboxer who was removed from the television show *Big Brother* in 2016 over a video appearing to show him attacking a woman. He said the video was a “total lie” and had been edited “to make me look bad”. Tate was later banned from Twitter for saying women should “bear responsibility” for being sexually assaulted, although his account was later reinstated following the takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk. Tate has also been banned from YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, with TikTok saying that “misogyny is a hateful ideology that is not tolerated”. However, it should be recognised that being banned does not mean that his ideology and message are removed completely, and videos on TikTok with the #AndrewTate hashtag have been viewed more than 12.7 billion times (although that figure also includes videos made by people criticising the influencer.)

Tate has previously said his views have been “misunderstood”, “taken out of context and amplified” to present “false narratives”. He has been most prominent in the news recently having been detained in Romania alongside his brother Tristan in December 2022 as part of an investigation into allegations of human trafficking and rape, which they deny. As of January 2023 they are both currently still in custody after losing a bid to end their detention.

## Misogyny and Toxic Masculinity

### What is Misogyny?

Misogyny is the dislike for, contempt of or belief in the inferiority of women. It can also refer to social systems or environments where women face hostility and hatred because they’re women in a world created by and for men — an historical patriarchy.

### What is Toxic Masculinity?

Toxic Masculinity refers to a set of attitudes and ways of behaving stereotypically associated with or expected of men, regarded as having a negative impact on men and on society. Examples of these stereotypes include:

- Men are tough, strong and do not cry.
- Men cannot control their sexual urges.
- Men are breadwinners and the head of the household.

Putting these expectations on men and boys can lead to them feeling isolated because they feel they are unable to ask for help.

## **Where are these attitudes being expressed?**

Displays of misogyny among children and young people occur in a variety of forms and are demonstrated verbally, non-verbally and physically, in classrooms, corridors and social spaces within educational establishments, in the home, in non-educational social spaces, in public and online.

Misogynistic behaviour can include:

- Casual use of mildly misogynistic language - 'girly' as an insult or pejorative term; 'man up' implying that masculinity is preferred to femininity
- Casual though often vindictive use of overtly sexualised and derogatory language - 'slut', 'skank' and 'whore' were widely used against girls or women
- 'Feminist' and 'feminism' considered as negative terms
- 'Feminazi' used to silence women and girls who speak from a feminist perspective
- Dismissive, contemptuous attitudes of some boys towards female peers, other adults, and towards their mothers (and sometimes acceptance or endorsement by male adults of such attitudes)
- Objectification of women and girls on the basis of their looks
- Dismissive attitude that women and girls should have responsibility for menial domestic chores
- Mockery and derision when women and girls adopt non-stereotypical gender roles, for example as football fans, footballers, surgeons
- Criticism of young women who are sexually active compared with acceptance that young men are and/or should be
- Sexual entitlement issues, for example overt sexual propositioning of girls and young women and boys pushing, grabbing and groping girls
- Joking about the sexual abuse of and physical violence against, women and girls, or framing conversations about the issue in such a way as to blame victims
- Engagement with computer games which are demeaning in their portrayal of women and often normalise violence against women, for example the Grand Theft Auto series of games
- Sending/sharing through social media sexual images of women and girls either with or without consent
- Use of social media to target sexual innuendo at girls and young women.

## What are the potential consequences?

Misogynistic attitudes and behaviour carry with them some worrying consequences for both sexes, and those who identify as transgender or non-binary.

Much of what is described as misogyny constitutes bullying, the effects of which upon victims are well documented. Faced with sexual bullying which is offensive, abusive, intimidating and malicious in nature, and which represents an abuse of power, victims experience fear, anxiety and stress, loss of dignity, humiliation and low self-esteem. The threat that this poses to victims' health and wellbeing and on their educational outcomes, is undeniable.

Some of the behaviours which fall under the term 'sexual bullying' are actually criminal in nature - i.e. on a spectrum of harassment for which there are consequences in the adult world. Specialists in violence against women tend to denote behaviour which constitutes sexual bullying as harassment or assault. There is also the potential of police involvement for individual behaviour in cases involving, for example, the non-consensual sharing of images or sexual assault.

## Challenging Misogyny

### Recognising what it looks like

Sexist and gender stereotypical language and behaviour reinforces misogyny and can lead to more serious consequences and a severe impact on a young person's development. The following list suggests some of the most common incidences of this behaviour and you may want to consider whether your child may be affected by some of these:

1. Sexual assault
  - ▷ Without consent, everything from skirt lifting, bra strap 'snapping' through to touching of breasts, buttocks and genitals and rape is sexual assault.
2. Abusive, insulting or sexualised language
  - ▷ Terms such as *slag*, *sket*, *whore* and *bitch* are used to demean girls and women. This includes use of words to describe women's genitalia as terms of abuse. These terms should be treated as seriously as racist or homophobic language. This language along with sexist or sexualised insults about clothing, body shape or related to sexual activity should be treated as unacceptable.
  - ▷ As with other forms of prejudicial language, sexist language is not always intended to hurt, but it will still have a negative impact on all genders because of the unconscious bias or inequality it promotes.
3. Sexist assumptions and stereotypes
  - ▷ 'Only boys can...' or 'girls are better at'. This can include attitudes such as women being too easily offended, girls or women being bossy rather than assertive. This can be responded to by pointing out role models who counter these stereotypes or by asking where these ideas come from 'Who says..?' Care needs to be taken to challenge what is termed as banter or jokes at the expense of women or girls.
  - ▷ Suggestions that females are inferior to males or that they should have a subordinate role should always be challenged, and you may want to refer to equalities law to support this.
4. 'Benevolent' sexism
  - ▷ Chivalrous attitudes to girls and women that appear positive and favourable, but are based on women being 'weaker', needing protection, and complimenting children based on

gendered stereotypes should be avoided or challenged when heard. However, this does not mean that we do not encourage all children and young people to be polite, kind and respectful to all.

5. Using girl as an insult or being told to 'man up'

- ▷ Phrases like 'crying (or throwing) like a girl' imply that girls are physically and emotionally weak. Similarly telling someone to 'man up' or 'grow a pair' assumes courage, strength and determination are male characteristics. Find non-gendered alternatives e.g. "Dig deep".

6. Gendered Language

- ▷ The English language appears to have evolved on the assumption that the world is male: 'the man in the street', 'manning the phones', the 'tax man' and so on. This language can make girls feel their contribution to society is invisible or useless. Counter this with appropriate alternatives such as police officer or fire fighter.
- ▷ It is important to remember that whilst many of the words used to describe men are positive, words used to describe women often have negative connotations. Examples here include bachelor and spinster; sir and madam. Some insults directed towards men make reference to women (e.g. 'old woman', 'son-of-bitch').

## Engaging with their online lives

It is important to have regular conversations about staying safe online and to encourage children to speak to you if they come across something worrying online. The role of influencers and social media in general can have a serious negative impact on a child's perception of what is 'right' and 'wrong' and all children, no matter their age, can be affected. It is important to recognise that young people spend so much of their time online that the things they see, say and do online may not be conducive to a healthy attitude towards others. Children have a tendency to be secretive about their online activity and whilst this may be indicative of something concerning, it may also simply be a part of their development and wanting to keep their personal life private.

- Encourage healthy debate - ask children what they have seen online lately and get them used to talking about it. Ask if they've seen something pop up on their social media, or what their trending hashtags are. Hashtags are widely used across social media platforms to group posts together by content - for example searching #chocolate will bring up a whole host of posts from public accounts (whether they're 'friends' or not) to do with chocolate.
- Share your own experiences - whilst this may not be appropriate for everyone or in every situation, sharing experiences of misogyny or toxic masculinity can allow children to feel more able to open up about their own experiences
- Follow online trends yourself - you may or may not be comfortable using social media yourself, but it is important to stay aware of what is going on at the moment. Many news sources only report the big headlines, but you can always find out more elsewhere

The following resources offer support to enable you to talk to your child about a range of online safety issues, set up home filtering in a child-friendly way and set up age-appropriate parental controls on digital devices:

- [Thinkuknow](#) by the National Crime Agency - Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (NCA-CEOP) - resources for parents and carers and children of all ages to help keep children safe online

- [Childnet](#) has developed [guidance for parents and carers](#) to begin a conversation about online safety, as well as [guidance on keeping under-fives safe online](#)
- [Parent Info](#) is a collaboration between Parent Zone and NCA-CEOP - support and guidance for parents and carers related to the digital world from leading experts and organisations
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) - [guidance for parents and carers](#) to help keep children safe online
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - tips and advice for parents and carers to keep children safe online - you can also [report any harmful content found online through the UK Safer Internet Centre](#)
- [Inclusive Digital Safety Hub](#) and [Online Safety Hub](#), created by South West Grid for Learning in partnership with Internet Matters - support and tailored advice for young people with additional learning needs and their parents or carers
- [Parents' Guide to Age Ratings](#) explains how the British Board of Film Classification rates content, and gives parents advice on choosing online content well
- The Children's Commissioner has published [advice for parents on talking to your child about online sexual harassment](#) specifically, based on input from children themselves

## Working with the School

Within school we want to ensure that all students are able to exist in a safe, happy and healthy environment. Staff will challenge misogyny and concerning attitudes where they are observed and pastoral staff will work with those affected by it. However, sadly we know that these attitudes may not be expressed where staff can observe it and so it is important that we keep lines of communication open. It is good to maintain a regular dialogue with your child about their experiences and if any concerns are raised with you, please get in touch with an appropriate member of staff who will be able to support you and your child.

Year Group	Tutors	House Teams
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