

Andrew Tate vs Women: How Did Misogyny Become So Popular Again?

Who is Andrew Tate and What Does He Stand For?

Andrew Tate is a British-American media personality who describes himself as “absolutely a misogynist” and initially rose to fame in 2016 after being removed from the 17th series of Big Brother following the release of a video of him hitting a woman with a belt. Following this controversy, Tate has cemented himself as the “king of toxic masculinity” with statements about how women are a man’s property and should “shut the f*** up, have kids, sit at home, be quiet and make coffee”. Many viral videos of his also include opinions such as how women are “intrinsicly lazy”, “can’t drive” and that 18-year-old women are “more attractive than 25-year-olds because they’ve been through less d****” and have led to #AndrewTate having over 12.7 billion views on TikTok. The former kickboxer who was made world champion four times, often encouraged his viewers to share these controversial clips to maximise engagement and peddle a wave of misogynistic views amongst a mainly young male audience.

Tate also labels himself as a "self-made multimillionaire" who has made his money through “a little webcam business” from his apartment. In a podcast interview, he claimed to have "75 women working for me in four locations, and I was doing \$600,000 a month from webcam". Six women claim to have been sexually exploited by Tate and his brother. All of this as well as a twitter feud with Greta Thunberg, culminated on the 29th of December 2022 where Tate, his brother, and two other individuals were arrested on suspicion of human trafficking, rape, and forming an organised crime group. Andrew Tate is now banned from TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube but clips of him can still easily be found circulating these social media platforms.

Who Has Tate Influenced and Why is this Damaging?

Most of Tate’s content is consumed by and aimed at men who look up to him as a ‘masculine’ role model. Often these men aspire to be like him and become blind to his misogyny as he captures their attention with his money and muscles. From a young age our patriarchal and sexist society shows and tells men how they should look, act and behave. Despite these men having grown up with these ideals, gender roles are being challenged by society more than ever, which makes them feel threatened. This societal idea of masculinity as needing to be the breadwinner as well as aesthetic expectations for men is fully fulfilled by Andrew Tate which makes him attractive to young men. Most of the men who follow Tate are likely to have gone down some form of the alt-right pipeline, wherein young men who are lonely and insecure in their masculinity find a community online which makes them feel seen. For Tate followers this pipeline occurs through watching videos of things like the gym or cars or supposed ‘business advice’ aimed at men. Social media algorithms will then suggest videos which progressively suggest views that this brand of masculinity is superior to any other identity and is propping up society and eventually leads to opinions that women are objects and should have less say. Men continue consuming this content and fall down the pipeline because it promises to make them live up to the masculine ideals they feel were expected of them.

It is obviously harmful to have a role model who is a powerful sex trafficker, however this movement of men online is much more than that. It is dangerous as these ideas are inspiring men to treat women badly and is negatively impacting women directly and indirectly. A common

view among this circle is that the way men and women show respect in a romantic relationship is completely different. For example, it is acceptable for a man to have female friends whilst in a relationship however this not true the case for women and her male friends, or if a man cheats on a woman this is just his sexual needs however a woman doing the same thing is considered completely disrespectful to her partner. This stems from the idea that the woman in the relationship is the property of the man but also that women being sexually free is 'disgusting'; evidently a harmful view which sexually represses women, who are already shamed for their sexuality. The list of negative effects on women is endless, with an expectation to be obedient, and ideas of stay-at-home mums being the ideal woman, however, men are affected by this online presence too. Suicide rates in men are already higher, with the pressures of masculinity not allowing for emotional outlets. The rise of Andrew Tate brings new, more intense pressures to meet the requirements of this arguably more extreme masculinity, causing harmful stereotypes of men with mental health problems, and men who don't go to the gym being 'weak'. The nature of the content which these men have consumed, along with the general misogyny engrained in society, has caused this to be a cycle which is hard to escape; with men who refuse to believe women, or even other men who they perceive as 'weak', who challenge them.

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Issues With Broader Understandings of Femininity and Masculinity

Andrew Tate's actions are undoubtedly harmful to all of us for various different reasons. Not only has he perpetrated horrific violence against women and girls, but his behaviour online also perpetuates harmful attitudes towards women and girls that encourages further violence. His actions also trap men and boys in patriarchal cycles of violence that isolate them from society and radicalise them into legitimising and perpetrating other acts of male violence. Women, men, and non-binary people are all affected by Tate's presence on the internet to varying degrees and in different ways.

A good way of understanding why this is the case can be found within post-structural approaches to feminist thinking, especially Judith Butler's idea of 'gender performativity.' Doing so helps us to reflect on the way individuals develop different ideas around masculinity and femininity and the impact that harmful ideas around gender can have on these perceptions. For those who haven't read Judith Butler's books (I highly recommend that you do), a dominant idea that has been developed throughout their academic work is the notion that gender is 'performed.' In describing it this way, Butler isn't arguing that gender is artificial or a choice. Rather they argue that the way people perceive their gender and relate to the gendered experiences of others is through repeated behaviour and practices that both validate and express their gender. For Butler, and other post-structural thinkers like them, gender is best seen as a way for people to make sense of themselves and the social world in which they live. Our gender is formed not only through our relations with others and the way we engage with the cultural influences around us.

Relating this back to Tate, we can position him within Butler's ideas as being a significant cultural influence on how gender is negatively performed and how toxic perceptions of masculinity and femininity are perpetuated. Social institutions throughout history – be they religious, political, or cultural – have often tried to limit or define how people's gender should be performed. Think of it as a 'script' given to a performer by a director who despises improvisation. Suddenly, the freedom

for an individual to act as they wanted to or even think outside of the script is taken away – and a performer who does wish to improvise, change a certain line in the script, or even perform an entirely different script is vilified or entirely denied the opportunity to be on stage. Andrew Tate, and others like him, have written a script that defines masculinity in such narrow and harmful ways, often defining ‘manliness’ within violent patriarchal ideals such as controlling domination and sexual conquest. Whilst the role of femininity within this script is defined as being simultaneously weak but dangerous – an oxymoron (emphasis on the ‘moron’) that needs only a five second glance at society or history to be disregarded. Of course, non-binary, trans, and other queer identities are completely written out of this script. Something Andrew Tate appears to have in common with the production rooms of Walt Disney Studios.

All of this is nothing new, these toxic narratives around gender, masculinity and femininity are as old as Western society. However, the aggressive and violent way in which Tate and his followers drive this interpretation is terrifyingly ferocious, and the unregulated power of social media allows them to become a cultural influence that affects the ways men and boys perceive themselves and the way they perceive women and girls, and also non-binary and trans people. Tate encourages harmful behaviours and violent practices that perpetuate the toxic masculinities that negatively impact all of us. Not only does it radicalise young boys and men into committing acts of sexual and physical violence, as they seek to emulate their toxic role models who tell them that this is how you perform and validate your masculinity, but it is far more insidious as it robs us of our ability to celebrate our own multi-faceted expression of gender and robs many others of their ability to explore and validate their own gender in healthy ways. It is this pluralistic interpretation of masculinity and femininity that people like Tate have tried to rob from us. The dignity of defining our own ‘roles’ within the cultural ‘script’, and the freedom to interpret our own place upon the ‘stage’ that is our social world. Emphasising the importance of tackling this hateful influence that seeks to drag us back to a far less free, far more dangerous world.

How Can We Combat Misogyny Online?

Misogyny online cannot solely be tied to Andrew Tate. Across all forms of social media, misogyny remains a potent and pervasive force that detrimentally impacts women. From the existence of the r/mensrights subreddit to excessive sexist abuse directed at female politicians and candidates with no regard for their actual views, misogyny is a powerful and seemingly inescapable force online. Indeed, a 2018 UN report captured the troubling link between online anonymity and sexist behaviour and even femicide. Naturally, the overt link between misogyny and violence and online figures like Tate cannot be ignored, however, combatting such sexist hate is not as clear cut.

Perhaps most vitally, misogynist figures should no longer be allowed to enjoy such prolific profiles on social media. Andrew Tate was afforded years of internet fame despite countless women voicing concern before only facing de-platformation after a male YouTuber publicly explored the impact of Tate on both women and impressionable young men. However, Tate quickly returned to the internet largely unabated. Here lies arguably the central issue - online misogyny thrives in an internet culture that fundamentally fails to hold content creators accountable for spreading dangerous rhetoric.

Fundamentally, the internet needs better role models. In replacing men like Tate with figures not so defined by toxic masculinity and instead healthy mentors, the next generation of internet users can help create an environment that no longer feeds into misogynist hate online. Tate is simply a microcosm for a much larger issue that needs urgent addressing. The current internet

environment willingly gives fame to dangerous expressions of sexist hate, thus it is only when this is adequately addressed that online hate can be truly combatted.