

Mapping the Neo-Manosphere(s): New Directions for Research

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Vivian Gerrand¹ , Debbie Ging², Joshua M. Roose¹ , and
Michael Flood³ 

Abstract

In a digital ecology that is increasingly conducive to social harms, misogynist ideology operates across a spectrum of primarily online actors known colloquially as ‘the Manosphere’. The manosphere and its associated red pill philosophy has now been around, in its current transnational and highly networked form, for over a decade. Yet the manosphere, particularly in the context of Covid-19, influencer culture and the affordances of new social media sites, has evolved rapidly in this time, and scholarship has yet to adequately capture these developments. This paper begins with a stocktake of contemporary literature on the manosphere and its core themes, before evaluating the evolving status of this online ecosystem of anti-women actors. It advances our theoretical comprehension of the neo-manosphere and its likely future directions by identifying and evaluating the four key developments which distinguish it from the earlier manosphere; namely migrations to new platforms, mainstreaming and monetization, ideological and ethnic diversification, and overlap with other extreme ideologies, most of which are driven by recommender algorithms.

Keywords

manosphere, social media, masculinities, neo-stoicism, manfluencers, health, violence, disengagement

¹Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, Burwood, VIC, Australia

²School of Communications, Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland

³School of Justice, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Corresponding Author:

Vivian Gerrand, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, VIC 3125, Australia.

Email: vivian.gerrand@deakin.edu.au

Introduction

The manosphere, a diverse ecosystem of online anti-feminist and male supremacist groups, has been attracting scholarly attention for well over 10 years, but has only recently entered public debates. Bound by the belief that mainstream society is a misandrist conspiracy that disadvantages men, male supremacist groups frame contemporary gender politics as a ‘war against men’, thus subverting the genealogy of violence, and frequently engage in misogynistic abuse as well as inciting violence against women (Roose 2020). The early manosphere was a conglomeration of communities, including men’s rights activists, involuntary celibates (or incels, who are men unable to access sex with women), dating coaches known as Pick Up Artists, male separatists and Christian conservatives. Since earlier studies of the manosphere (e.g., Ging 2017; Gottell and Dutton 2016; Jane 2018; Marwick and Caplan 2018), a substantial body of literature has been produced in response to this online environment of accelerating harms.

In this article, we take stock of this growing body of scholarship, and its key tenets and limitations, through a review of literature on the manosphere produced since 2019. We consider how and why the main subgroups of the manosphere have changed. In particular, we evaluate how the literature has diversified in disciplinary terms, as well as how it has responded to a number of important ontological developments such as new online platforms, the rise of influencer culture, the evolution of antifeminism in cultures of the radical and far right, the growth of incel culture, and the monetisation of gender, stoic and wellness paradigms in male supremacist content. We draw on approximately 100 recent scholarly publications as well as materials produced by members of the contemporary manosphere that are relevant to our analysis. The article concludes by considering emerging literature on educational interventions and disengagement from the manosphere. In addition to new mappings, which reflect both political shifts and the ever-changing nature of digital networks, we are also interested in new theorisations of the male supremacist ecosystem.

Since Ging’s (2017) preliminary mapping, various attempts have been made to (re)map and (re)theorise the manosphere in recent years (e.g., Dafaure 2022; Han and Yin 2023; Heritage 2023; Horta Ribeiro et al. 2021; Johanssen 2021; Krendel 2020; Perliger et al. 2023; Rothermel 2023; Sugiura 2021; van Valkenburgh 2018). Several of these have identified similar categories to Ging’s (2017) five ‘hubs of the manosphere’ (Men’s Rights Associations, ‘Men Going Their Own Way’, Pick Up Artists, Traditional Christian Conservatives and Gamer/Geek culture/incels) and have also identified some significant developments since 2017. For example, in their large-scale, data-driven characterization of the manosphere, Horta Ribeiro et al. (2021) found that older communities, such as Pick Up Artists and Men’s Rights Activists, were giving way to more extreme ones like Incels and Men Going Their Own Way, and that these newer communities were more misogynistic than the older ones. Similarly, Perliger et al. (2023) applied web-crawling software¹ to undertake open-source internet searches to sample ‘discursive data from the digital spaces of five misogynist communities’: Incel,

Chauvinist far-right, MGTOW, MRA, and PUA. In line with [Horta Ribeiro et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Baele et al. \(2023\)](#), they found that the incel or ‘involuntary celibate’ community had grown in recent years, while PUAs had diminished in size and reach.

[Marwick and Caplan \(2018\)](#), [Sugiura \(2021\)](#), [Bratich and Banet-Weiser \(2019\)](#) and others have applied feminist, gender studies or masculinity studies frameworks to explain the male supremacist ecosystem, albeit in the broader contexts of neoliberal capitalism or technocapitalism. For example, [Bratich and Banet-Weiser \(2019\)](#) present a cogent conjunctural analysis to demonstrate how the incel community grew as a response to the failed promises of neoliberal capitalism and, more specifically, of Pick Up Artists. [Ging’s \(2017\)](#) socio-technical analysis was concerned with theorising both the impact of social media affordances on men’s rights politics and the apparent tensions between hegemonic masculinity and ‘victimised’ geek masculinities. She theorised that the technological affordances of social media significantly transformed the rhetorical, thematic and discursive contours of men’s rights politics when they migrated online. She also took issue with the notion that beta masculinity could not be understood as hegemonic – or at least aspiring to hegemony. Drawing on [Bridges and Pascoe’s \(2014\)](#) hybrid masculinities, Ging theorised that beta and incel masculinities were heavily invested in the project of restoring male hegemony, even though they strategically distanced themselves from hegemonic masculinity. In other words, they deliberately adopted performances and signifiers of victimhood and suffering in order to “to conceal systems of power and inequality in historically new ways” ([Bridges and Pascoe 2014](#), 246).

Others have used theoretical frameworks outside gender or masculinity studies, such as psychoanalysis ([Johanssen 2021](#)), linguistics ([Bogetić et al. 2023](#); [Heritage 2023](#); [Heritage and Koller 2020](#)) and terrorism studies ([Roose 2020](#); [Thorburn 2023](#)) to provide alternative perspectives and critiques on the causes and manifestations of male supremacy. In the first in-depth analysis of the manosphere from a psychoanalytic perspective, [Johanssen \(2021\)](#) argues that men’s rights activists present contradictory thoughts, desires and fantasies about women which include but also go beyond misogyny. In a more recent - and indeed concerning - development, academics from the field of evolutionary psychology, a highly disputed arm of biological science upon which most manosphere, anti-feminist and incel arguments are based, have begun analysing incels using these same theoretical concepts. These approaches have been critiqued by feminist scholars ([Carian et al. 2023](#); [Kelly et al. 2024](#)) for their reliance on biological essentialism, downplaying of misogyny and over-emphasis on mental health as a causal factor, thus eschewing the gender-political agenda of the incelsphere and its connection to more mainstream forms of misogyny.

Our re-mapping, supported by the relevant literature, identifies and theorises a number of significant and related new developments which characterise what we refer to as the neo-manosphere. These are: the appearance of a number of new platforms which have both facilitated the mainstreaming of male supremacy (e.g., on TikTok) and enabled its migration into more extreme and ‘closed’ spaces, such as Telegram, Gab and Discord; the increased commercialisation and monetisation of the manosphere; the

rise of influencer culture and the emergence of the ‘manfluencer’; the acknowledgement of female anti-feminists in the manosphere; and greater visibility of ethnic diversity and non-white actors in the male supremacist ecosystem. The scholarship addressing these various developments is outlined and evaluated in detail below.

A Note on Methods

We thematically identified 430 articles on the manosphere published since 2019. This was done through citation chaining, network visualisation, paper recommendations, collaborative collection sharing of the AI powered Research Rabbit application and a hand search of online databases. We draw on approximately 100 articles in our analysis, selecting from this search the most recent publications to ensure our mapping is up-to-date.

Mapping the Neo-Manosphere(s): New Platforms, Pipelines and Pathways

The emergence of a raft of new social media platforms has been instrumental in facilitating dynamics of both mainstreaming on popular platforms such as TikTok (Baker et al. 2024; Bonansinga 2024; Solea and Sugiura 2023) and radicalisation into more niche, underground spaces such as Gab, Discord and Telegram (Collins 2024; Gallagher et al. 2021). In particular, short video formats which are heavily driven by recommender algorithms, such as TikTok and YouTube Shorts, have received considerable attention for their ability to push ideologically congenial and increasingly extreme content into users’ feeds (Haroon et al. 2023) and to rapidly amplify content, as in the case of Andrew Tate’s videos on TikTok, which reached over 12 billion views before he was banned from the platform in 2022 (Das 2022). Experimental studies using sockpuppet accounts (e.g., Baker et al. 2024) have demonstrated the speed and frequency with which young male users on TikTok, in particular, are served manosphere and manfluencer content based on their gender and search and viewing histories. Baker et al. (2024) have also shown that banning accounts is wholly ineffective as Tate’s content remained the most recommended to their male sockpuppet accounts on both TikTok and YouTube Shorts long after his account was shut down. This is due to widespread reamplification of his videos by micro-influencers and fans, who also use ostensibly innocuous hashtags such as #mindset, #motivation and #money to direct users toward this content and this content toward their users.

In addition, platform and subreddit closures have caused certain manosphere communities, such as incels, to migrate to more dedicated spaces such as incels.is as well as to more mainstream platforms. Recent studies have found that the incel community has grown in size and reach, and that incel ideologies have become more mainstream, having migrated beyond incel-specific servers and reddit fora to large social media platforms such as Tik Tok (Solea and Sugiura 2023). This is also borne out by Beale et al.’s cross-platform analysis of violent extremist language (2023) which found that there is a clear upward trend in the level of extremist discussions within the

incelosphere between 2016 and 2022, with a trend towards increased violent extremist language (Baele et al. 2023).² The increasing prevalence of incel ideologies in society is undoubtedly cause for alarm. However, as Czerwinsky (2024) warns, it is important to avoid regarding the violent misogyny of incels as an exception with regard to other forms of misogyny and to instead ensure that incelism is considered in continuity with structural male supremacy. We should remember that incel-motivated attacks on women are far rarer than other, more pervasive incidents of violence against women.

The origins of the contemporary manosphere are intimately linked with #GamerGate, a 2014–2015 online harassment campaign that specifically targeted women in the video game industry, as well as those who critiqued game culture's misogynistic tropes and representational politics. Disguised as a debate about journalism ethics and political correctness, #GamerGate was a crusade to preserve white male internet culture and, to a large degree, it shaped the terms of engagement for the Culture Wars that followed (Warzel 2019). Its communicative tactics, including doxing, hacking, and false-flag campaigns (Ging 2023) have since become staple rhetorical strategies of the far right, anti-feminists and anti-trans groups. Given #GamerGate's history as a nerve centre for early manosphere ideas, it is unsurprising that gaming spaces continue to function as sites of misogynist indoctrination. In recent work on gaming and extremism, Schlegel and Kowert (2024) demonstrate how games and game-adjacent spaces, such as Discord, Twitch, Steam, and DLive, are being leveraged by extremists for the purposes of radicalization, recruitment, and mobilization. Although #GamerGate has subsided as a significant force in the manosphere, there remains significant crossover between male supremacism and online gaming communities. As the sections below demonstrate, increased migratory pathways across platforms have also facilitated increased ideological overlap with a wide range of manosphere-adjacent content, from financial, mental health and wellness advice to far right, anti-trans and conspiracy material.

Profit-Making – the Manosphere as 'Grift'

The manosphere's emergence in relation to neoliberal capitalism is the subject of a number of rich theorisations (e.g., Bratich and Banet-Weiser 2019; Garlick 2023). For example, Bujalka et al. (2022) address the recent monetization of the manosphere which, in turn, is linked to the rise of influencer culture. This political-economy-of-media framework focuses on how influential digital content producers construct a perception of threat in their audience, while simultaneously positioning themselves as a solution to this same threat. According to Bujalka et al. (2022), influential figures within the Manosphere perpetuate 'symbiotic cycles of ontological security and insecurity through the YouTube and social media content they produce.' Bujalka et al regard such cycles as a 'protection racket,' in which 'thought leaders' of the manosphere 'maintain and grow their audience from whom they extract material, social or political resources.' Importantly, the authors draw our attention to how the 'solutions' provided by such online business models rely on the kinds of existential insecurities and crises that are a legacy of neoliberalism and capitalism.

Similarly, [Garlick \(2023\)](#) identifies such manosphere self-improvement strategies as ‘technologies of insecurity’, designed to manage the existential precarity and complex uncertainties inherent in neoliberal logics and markets. In particular, he notes how neoliberal capitalism disavows political and systemic injustices as the root causes of men’s diminished economic prospects, loss of dignity and dysfunctional human relationships, instead framing insecurity as an individual problem, and in turn proposing individualised solutions. This identification of the manosphere as grift is an important new development in the scholarship, which demonstrates how many facets of the neo-manosphere exploit existing vulnerabilities and monetise them in a cycle of ‘ontological racketeering’, which consists of ‘threat proliferation’, affirming and extending in viewers a sense of crisis, and alternately promising to deliver solutions to such threats.

Within this economic context of precarity and individualism, the spread of algorithmically-driven new platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and Spotify and the associated rise of influencer culture have enabled grassroots political ‘digital evangelists’ to gain prominence and to monetise populist political ideologies hostile to globalism, multiculturalism, and gender politics. [Finlayson \(2021\)](#) views these ideologies as converging around hostility to a particular conceptualisation of liberalism as a system which has failed to recognise ‘natural’ limits to equality and social justice. Manosphere grifters can be considered as part of this broader cohort of radical conservative and reactionary ‘ideological entrepreneurs’, who valorise inequality as ‘natural’ ([Finlayson 2021](#)) within a ‘bootstraps epistemology’ ([Ma 2024](#)). This grift can also be heard in the burgeoning variety of manosphere-adjacent yet under-studied ‘bro’ podcasts such as the Joe Rogan Experience ([Bozzi 2024](#); [Rae 2023](#)). Research on ‘manfluencers’ is relatively new and has tended to focus on processes of mainstreaming ([Czerwinsky 2024](#)) or on their negative influence in school settings ([Roberts and Wescott 2024](#); [Wescott et al. 2023](#)). Much work remains to be done on a new raft of manfluencers emerging in non-English speaking countries, such as Amadeo Lladós in Spain and Illan Castronovo in France, who emulate Tate’s talking points and business model.³

In a recent study, [Baker et al. \(2024\)](#) used experimental, ‘reverse-engineering’ methods to measure and analyse the volume of manfluencer and other toxic content being recommended to various male accounts on TikTok and YouTube Shorts. The researchers identified that the most common themes in a dataset of 4000 videos were, in order of prevalence, alpha masculinity, anti-feminism / misogyny, reactionary right and conspiracy. The dominance of alpha masculinity over overt anti-feminism is indicative of the recent shift toward male self-help hacks and an ostensible concern for men’s wellbeing. Most of this content, however, promulgates the myth that anyone can get rich if they work hard enough, and is often a thinly veiled advertisement for influencers’ side hustles. In relation to mental health, it was found that most manfluencers dismiss emotional expression, depression and therapy as weak, emasculating and for women, with one even encouraging boys to stop taking medication and turn to diet and fitness instead. These messages from unqualified but highly influential entrepreneurs are part

of a perceived re-masculinisation project, which Aleks Hammo (2023) terms the ‘stoic industrial complex’ (Baker et al. 2024). Modern proponents of neo-Stoicism, such as Ryan Holiday, Jordan Peterson, Lex Fridman, David Goggins and Jocko Willink, emphasise personal discipline and purpose in everyday life, and promote simplistic, extreme, and polarising content to reach a wide audience (Hammo 2023).

Monetising Wellness

Akin to the individualised solutions to structural issues promoted elsewhere online, health and wellness-based manfluencers reinforce the idea that taking care of one’s body and mind is the best strategy for navigating crisis conditions. Within this neo-liberal worldview, agency is found in adopting pseudoscientific wellness rituals and using alternative health products (Citarella 2021; Gerrand 2020; Levy 2023). This shift towards health, wellness and stoic paradigms (Hammo 2023; Zuckerberg 2018) is a significant new development in the neo-manosphere and calls for deeper scholarly investigation, in particular regarding its efficacy as a strategy for drawing men into male supremacist spaces.

An extension of this neo-stoic self-improvement paradigm is the so-called ‘NoFap’ movement of semen retention communities, whose adherents reject pornography and promote abstinence from masturbation (Smith 2023). The idea of retaining semen was popularised when student coder Alexander Rhodes posted a link to a Chinese study on a reddit r/todayilearned forum, which claimed men’s testosterone levels peak when they do not ejaculate for a week. According to Burnett (2021), Self-Masters engage in meticulous self-tracking and self-measurement to cultivate a narrative of personal agency and success. Typical community members, also known as ‘fapstronauts’, are white, heterosexual, male, live in the West, and identify as atheist or agnostic (Burnett 2021). NoFap adherents reportedly experience improved focus, concentration, happiness, and confidence, as well as enhanced sexual energy and better sexual experiences (Burnett 2021; Citarella 2021; Prause and Ley 2023). Hartmann (2021) found that NoFap adherents believe that watching pornography and accessing effortless orgasms threatens the patriarchal order and the achievement of ‘real’ heterosexuality since pornography is believed to hijack the brain’s reward system, leading to dopamine-driven addiction and reduced sensitivity to pleasure. Through a study of ‘NoFap’ YouTube videos, she has traced the logics of the contemporary movement within the historical context of discourses of masturbation abstinence. Drawing on Foucault and Laqueur, Hartmann (2021) reflects that masturbation anxieties stem from concerns over self-government, ‘crucial to the emergence of forms of modern subjectivity’. Thus, while masturbation historically in gay and women’s liberation has been seen as an empowering and liberatory practice, it has for some heterosexual men instead been identified as the locus of diminishment and emasculation (Hartmann 2021).

Ideological Diversification: The Black Manosphere, Tradwives and the Rise of 'Pick-Me' Women

Studies of incel and anti-feminist communities have tended to focus on white men due to these communities' assumed predominantly white, male origins. However, the diversity of many of the manosphere's communities has gained significant visibility in recent years, challenging assumptions about manosphere adherents' whiteness. This is especially the case in the incel community, where recent 'race polls' on the largest incel forum, incels.is, indicate that white incels are in a minority (13.9 percent) with black (8.9 percent), Asian (13.9 percent) and Indian incels (36.1 percent) together accounting for the majority. Despite this, the incel community remains deeply racist and structured by racialized, white supremacist hierarchies. While incels often have conflicting ideologies about the place of race/ethnicity in sexual market value ([Heritage 2023](#)), there is broad consensus that white men are the most desirable to women of all ethnicities, as demonstrated by the acronym 'JBW' (Just Be White) ([Kelly et al. 2021](#)). Non-white incels are referred to as 'ethnic-cels', 'rice-cels' or 'curry-cels', reflecting the (widely internalised) belief that Asian men are desexualized and seen as feminine/weak in Western countries. 'Blackpill Science' is also used to claim that Black and Latino men are hypersexual and hypermasculine, with black alpha males or Chads referred to as 'Tyrone'.

Meanwhile, on more mainstream platforms such as TikTok and YouTube Shorts, a number of Black manfluencers have risen to fame, such as Myron Gaines and Walter Weekes, hosts of the Fresh and Fit podcast. Gaines and Weekes regularly use language to appeal to Black men, for example by invoking the discourse of social justice movements, albeit reappropriated to justify misogyny and male superiority ([Dashiell 2024](#)). According to Dashiell, 'Gaines and Weekes invariably slip in and out of African American Vernacular English, which conveys not only authenticity but also forges a connection with Black listeners.' He also maintains that narratives about men being 'kept down' by women double as dogwhistles to Black men, signalling the ways in which the dominant white culture forces them to behave in certain ways. The Black manosphere is, according to [Procope Bell \(2024\)](#), characterised by men who are concerned with any challenge to Black male authority and dominance. Culturally conservative in the main, they are typically also homophobic and transphobic, believing too that welfare policies disrupt their patriarchal roles as leaders within Black families. While they do not support white supremacy, they nevertheless use racialized language when referring to Black women. In proximity to white manosphere logics, therefore, they too adopt individualised 'solutions' to structural problems within a system that remains unchanged.

At first glance, this ethnic diversification is difficult to square with the manosphere's significant overlaps with the alt right and the far right. For example, in 2023 Fresh and Fit hosted white supremacist Nick Fuentes, despite the show's broader attempts to appeal to a black male audience. Similarly, the Tate brothers must walk a fine line between far-right rhetoric on immigration and their own ethnicity (their father was

African-American) and status as migrants. In yet another ostensibly contradictory twist, akin to some European right-leaning politicians (Sibgatullina and Abbas 2021), both Andrew Tate and Sneako have recently converted to Islam. The appeal of Islam to western men's rights activists is not only its apparent 'anti-wokeness' and conservative gender roles but also the prospect of reaching another vast audience. Figures like Tate and Sneako draw on stereotypes about Islam as patriarchal, stoic and intolerant of progressive agendas to challenge western liberalism, despite their own permissive lifestyles (Baker et al. 2024). Tate's recent likening of the Palestinian struggle to white, British far-right rioters in the UK is further indication of manfluencers' propensity for ideological dislocation and shapeshifting to suit ever-changing moods and markets.

Another critical development within the contemporary manosphere is that it is now home to a proliferation of anti-feminist 'trad' women online accounts (Hoebanx 2024). Intersecting with the far right (Leidig 2023) but not necessarily of the far right (Scrinzi 2024), such women uphold hierarchical essentialist understandings of gender seen elsewhere in the manosphere. As Scrinzi argues, the common 'emphasis on socio-structural factors and economic interest issues in accounting for far-right men's mobilisation', while women's involvement has been viewed as 'largely driven by "private" issues', neglects the nuances of women's investment in upholding anti-gender politics (2024). Evianne Leidig's (2023) exploration of far-right women influencers is a valuable contribution to understanding the rise of entrepreneurial tradwives and anti-feminist influencers, who trade on intimacy and authenticity to seek new recruits for gender-regressive, anti-LGBTQIA+ and white nationalist agendas. These can be broadly divided into celebrity 'tradwives' such as Estee Williams, Hannah Neeleman, and Nara Smith, who idealise the pre-modern domestic subservience of women, and overtly political anti-feminist commentators such as Hannah Pearl Davies (Bauer 2024).

The study of Black women content creators who identify as 'Pick-Me' women – a derogatory term to describe anti-feminist women (Procope Bell 2024) – offers additional insight into the diversity in the trad-women movement. 'Pick-Me' denotes the desire to be chosen over other women by men, strategically tailoring themselves to the wishes of Black manosphere men (2024). Paradoxically, these successful black female digital entrepreneurs encourage other black women to reject the material pressures of racialised capitalism and to find an apparent refuge from such systems in serving their husbands (Procope Bell 2024). As with almost all of the recent trends observed in this analysis, the Pick-Me phenomenon is heavily influenced by socio-economic conditions. As Procope Bell points out, even though 70 percent of Black women are sole or primary breadwinners of their families, they are overrepresented in low-wage jobs (2024). Such cohorts may understandably want to reject 'The Strong Black Woman' myth and a life of economic struggle and inequity, finding dignity in marriage and homemaking as a way out of poverty and humiliation. In a patriarchal bargain (Kandiyoti 1988), husbands become 'bosses' for these women, to whom they willingly submit. This submission plays out in a variety of ways. Single mother Courtney Michelle, for example, has been subjected to both praise and character attacks (the

manosphere is typically hostile towards single mothers) while housewife influencer Ebony Nikita Okeke presents her life as a series of cosy domestic and creative pursuits, with uplifting videos about overcoming stereotypes about Black femininity (Procope Bell 2024).

Overlap with Other Extreme Ideologies

Recent research indicates that the manosphere's boundaries have become increasingly porous due to cross-fertilisation among manosphere groups, across platforms and with other extreme ideologies. Most of this work on ideological 'contagion' focuses on incels, arguably the most researched subgroup of the manosphere. This is partly due to security concerns about stochastic terrorism, a form of 'lone wolf' political violence often instigated by online hate, with much of this research located in the extremism studies space (Baele et al. 2023, Brace et al. 2023; Roose et al. 2022; DeCook and Kelly 2022) as governments are keen to track the ever-changing dynamics of these communities and their pipelines and pathways into other extreme ideologies. It is also arguably in part attributable to the extreme nature of incel discourse, which is characterised by a niche lexicon of misogyny, transgressive imagery, self-loathing and oftentimes suicidal ideation. Studies such as those by Baele et al. (2023) and Brace et al. (2023) represent a significant shift away from static, snapshot analyses of comment threads taken from individual platforms – a development called for by Ging and Murphy (2021) – toward a more dynamic, ecosystems approach to incel networks, communicative patterns and diachronic trends.

In the largest quantitative study on incels to date, Baele et al. (2023) scraped content from Reddit, dedicated incel forums, chans (anonymous imageboard forums), Telegram, and Instagram to observe how language in incel communities has evolved over time and across different online spaces. They found that, since the closure of major subreddits such as r/Incel and r/Braincels, forums like Incels.is have become central hubs featuring increasingly hostile and violent language, indicating an intensification of extremism in these spaces. This work suggests that these platforms contribute to a pipeline of radicalization, where users progress from general grievances to more extreme nihilistic beliefs, often symbolized by Black pill philosophy, which fosters a particularly fatalistic worldview. In another study using the same database, Brace et al. (2023) analyzed outlinking on incel forums to track ideological 'contagion' and cross-pollination with other worldviews. They found that these spaces frequently direct members to far-right, conspiracy and, occasionally, far-left ideas. This tendency within the incelsphere toward 'mixed, unclear, and unstable' ideologies intensifies participants' grievances and allows extreme ideologies to evolve and spread in unexpected ways, complicating intervention strategies (Aiolfi et al. 2024).

Importantly, the issue of ideological crossover is not restricted to incel spaces. As Baker et al.'s. (2024) study of recommender algorithms on TikTok and YouTube Shorts has demonstrated, in addition to male supremacist content, many of the fake male accounts were served reactionary right-wing and conspiracy content (13.6 percent of

recommended content on TikTok and 5.2 percent of recommended content on YouTube Shorts), much of which was anti-transgender. This supports a growing body of literature which notes increasing ideological convergence across extreme online communities (Bundtzen 2023; Castillo-Small 2022; Copland 2023; Roose 2024; Roose et al. 2022) as well as evidence of online misogyny functioning as a gateway to other far right ideologies (Huber et al. 2023; Mamié et al. 2021; Miller-Idriss 2022).

Intervention: Moving from a Crisis of Masculinity to a Crisis of Connection

The scale of the problem calls for urgent educational interventions in both gender equality and critical digital media literacy. Such interventions, in turn, require a deeper understanding of boys' and men's motivations for joining and leaving such misogynist groups. Smith et al.'s (2024) and Botto and Gottzén's (2024) studies lay important foundations for potential pathways out of the manosphere. Similar approaches to exiting the manosphere can be found in analyses of a variety of manosphere-adjacent Reddit forums such as r/IncelExit and r/ExRedPill (Gheorghe and Clement 2023; Thorburn 2023) and r/Stoicism (Maloney et al. 2024). These studies highlight the role of community support in enabling exit pathways, often referred to within incel communities as the putting down of 'copes', or coping mechanisms. Reddit spaces such as r/IncelExit may be thus leveraged for future disengagement efforts 'grounded in mutual aid, peer support, and inner-group collaborative encouragement' (Gheorghe and Clement 2023). Other strategies to create empathetic engagement with young men at risk of violent misogynist radicalisation include art, as Gerrand (2022; 2023) highlights in her exploration of the work of feminist Instagram comic artist and influencer Lily O'Farrell. O'Farrell uses art as a site of 'calling people in', in which it is possible to support disengagement from the manosphere by allowing viewers insight into its logics (O'Farrell 2021).

Finally, scholars have also begun to engage with male supremacists and incels directly (e.g. Daly and Reed, 2022; Murphy 2023; Moskalenko et al. 2022; Smith et al. 2024; Andersen 2024) to better understand why men are attracted to joining incel communities, and to develop strategies and interventions for exiting these spaces. Importantly, the taboo on investigating the links between inceldom, autism and other mental health issues has been recently lifted by Speckhard et al. (2021), Moskalenko et al. (2022), Delaney et al. (2024) and Broyd et al. (2023). These scholars recommend tailored, empathetic mental health interventions as well as broader educational efforts to destigmatize and address incels' unique challenges, especially for mental health providers engaging with individuals from this group.

However, while recent scholarship has rightly focused on community-led and educational interventions as crucial pathways out of the manosphere, these must be calibrated within a framework of addressing broader male supremacist cultures (Carian et al. 2023). Mental health interventions and peer support models offer important inroads into addressing the problem; however, they cannot fully account for the complex political economy that sustains and rewards online misogyny. The

increasingly commercialised nature of the manosphere—embedded in influencer culture, social media algorithms, and digital economies demands a structural, rather than solely therapeutic, response (Ging 2019).

The appeal of populist masculinity must be situated within a longer arc of economic dislocation, political disenchantment and the erosion of collective social identities under neoliberalism (Roose 2020). The manosphere serves not only as a reactionary site of grievance but also as a profitable digital enterprise that repackages structural marginalisation as personal failure. This ideological pivot from systemic inequality to individual inadequacy reinforces neoliberal tropes while offering commercial solutions in the form of self-help, financial gifts, and stoic re-masculinisation.

Against this context, the regulation of online platforms must be brought to the fore. Social media ecosystems remain largely unregulated in their amplification of misogynistic content through opaque algorithmic recommendation systems. Government efforts to regulate them have met with fierce resistance and resulted in court cases – and not always successful ones (eSafety Commissioner 2024). Structural interventions must therefore include policy reforms that address not just content moderation, but also the architecture of virality, algorithmic bias, and platform accountability. Such approaches should complement rather than replace educational strategies, recognising that upstream regulation of the digital environment is as crucial to long-term prevention.

Finally, to fully confront the socio-economic forces shaping digital gender politics, it is essential to consider the manosphere as both ideology and industry. Manfluencers, self-styled gurus, and ideological entrepreneurs operate within a digital attention economy that converts masculine insecurity into capital. Understanding this monetisation of grievance as part of a broader neoliberal logic of deregulated markets and hollowed-out institutions allows for a more robust and multifaceted citizenship-centred intervention strategy that combines pedagogical, psychological, and political-economic levers of change.

As the manosphere becomes more diverse, politically incoherent, and ideologically unstable - driven predominantly by the whims of algorithmic capitalism - there is an increasingly urgent need to educate boys and men about gendered disinformation, mental health, gender-based abuse and the political economies of social media and influencer culture. This challenge is further complicated by the recent incursion of analyses from the field of evolutionary psychology into this space, as well as some psychotherapists working with boys, who eschew structural analyses of power, insist on immutable sex differences and claim that encouraging boys to express emotion is treating them as ‘defective girls’. Teachers, parents and policy makers are often unaware of the deep philosophical divides between these approaches and those which are underpinned by inclusive, social-constructionist and intersectional principles. Scholarship on educational interventions in Australia and UK is arguably leading the charge in progressive interventions (see Flood 2019, 2024; Ging et al. 2024; Haslop et al. 2024; Keddie 2020, 2021; Keddie and Bartel 2021; Keddie et al. 2023; O’Rourke and Haslop 2023; Roberts and Wescott 2024; Wescott et al. 2023; Wescott and Roberts

2024). As Niobe Way (2019) argues, at the heart of successful intervention is the need to shift the paradigm away from the concept of masculinity in crisis toward that of a crisis of connection among men, caused by their social conditioning and the ongoing pressures to conform to stoic masculinity in a socio-economic context which is isolating and alienating men from their feelings, from strong network ties and from empathetic engagements with others.

Conclusion

The current manosphere strongly reflects a number of broader, related trends in contemporary online politics, which have been heavily amplified by social media algorithms. These include the platforming of a relatively small number of extremely powerful actors, whose reach and impact are unprecedented, as well as the Culture War framing of political struggles as polarized, equally extreme ‘sides’ at war. The dominance of ‘ideological entrepreneurs’ (Jurg et al. 2023) thus marks a significant new shift in the manosphere, whereby male-supremacist influencers are not only accumulating considerable wealth but are also using the practices of influencer culture for metapolitical goals, a phenomenon noted by Maly (2020) in the context of the Far Right in recent years. According to Baker et al. (2024) “Manfluencers’ have [] effectively replaced pick-up artists and the seduction industry with a significantly more lucrative, popular, and ostensibly well-intentioned venture, which purports to give men purpose, confidence and control.”

This increasing mainstreaming and normalisation of manosphere ideologies is directly reflected in changing attitudes of boys and men, including their role in the recent re-election of Donald Trump in the United States (Marcus 2024). A recent UK report (Internet Matters 2023) indicates that almost 23 percent of teenage boys aged 15%–16% and 56 percent of young fathers up to the age of 35 have a positive view of Andrew Tate. In Australia, a representative survey conducted in 2020 indicates that almost 32 percent of Australian men believe that rights for women have gone too far (Roose et al. 2020). These attitudinal shifts have significant real-world impact. Misogyny is a significant risk factor for violent extremism (Baele et al., 2023; Hoffman et al., 2020; Pearson, 2023; Roose et al., 2020; Roose and Cook, 2022; Rottweiler et al., 2024; Zimmerman, 2024) but also for violence against women and interpersonal violence. Thus, despite the intense focus on incels as a potential terrorist threat, it is important to consider that incel-inspired attacks have resulted in approximately 59 fatalities worldwide (Hoffman et al. 2020), compared with 51,100 women killed by their male partners or family members in 2023 alone (UNODC 2024).

As we move into the era of Web 3.0, a new set of technological affordances, underpinned by virtual reality, automation and artificial intelligence will create new possibilities for male supremacists to sabotage, shame, and indoctrinate (Frances-Wright and Ayad 2024; Ging 2023). Already, deep fake technologies enable malicious actors to create images that violate dignity for example through juxtaposing high-profile women’s faces onto pornographic images (O’Farrell 2023). Such technologies

are also being mobilised by anti-feminists to ‘fix’ images of perceived ‘broken’ people, as in the recent 4chan-led campaign, ‘DignifAI,’ designed to dress ‘degenerate’ women more modestly using AI software (Dickson 2024). In both cases, women are humiliated; their bodily autonomy and agency removed. The future implications of AI are not yet known but the ongoing failure to regulate technology companies indicates that the manosphere will continue to optimise technology in order to amplify its messages. Meanwhile, the continued dominance of neoliberal forms of government emphasising free market ideologies opposed to regulation of the marketplace will elicit increasingly individualist forms of response and resilience. While the tactical femininities and masculinities offered by the manosphere may offer its followers short-term, individual ‘solutions’, these are patriarchal forms of dignity (Kandiyoti 1988) and they work in the service of larger reactionary projects invested in rolling back human rights and facilitating human exploitation at global scale.

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ORCID iDs

Vivian Gerrand  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3169-547X>

Joshua M. Roose  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7689-9652>

Michael Flood  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0495-0770>

Notes

1. The researchers used search-engine optimisation programme Screaming Frog SEO Spider to identify relevant hyperlinks on English-language manosphere web-pages to which they then applied text-based data-scraping tools (Perlinger et al. 2023).
2. Beale et al. found that newer sub-Reddits exhibit lower levels of violent extremist language than incel forums or the chan image-boards. However Beale et al. found activity on the Incels.is platform changed notably with the COVID-19 lockdown and incel-inspired violent acts (2023).
3. Studies of non-English speaking manosphere communities we identified include Dey’s 2023 study of online sexual harassment in Indian universities, Lacalle et al. ’s 2024 study of denigratory language within the Spanish manosphere and Cannito and Mercuri’s 2022 study of non-resident fathers and gender relations in the Italian manosphere.

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Author Biographies

Dr. Vivian Gerrand is a Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute where she is an associate investigator on the ARC Project: 'Anti-Women online Movements; Pathways and Patterns of Participation'. She was a Chief Investigator on the Horizon 2020 Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism and Polarisation (BRaVE) Project (2019-21). She is a member of the Addressing Violent Extremism and Radicalisation to Terrorism (AVERT) Executive Committee. Vivian is the author of *Possible Spaces of Somali Belonging* (MUP 2016) and co-editor of *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship* (Palgrave MacMillan 2021).

Dr. Debbie Ging is Professor of Digital Media and Gender in the School of Communications, Dublin City University. She teaches and researches on gender, sexuality and digital media, with a focus on digital hate, online anti-feminist men's rights politics, the incel subculture and radicalisation of boys and men into male supremacist ideologies. Her research also addresses youth experiences of gender-based and sexual abuse online and educational interventions to tackle this issue. Debbie is a member of the National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre and of the Institute for Future Media, Democracy and Society (FuJo).

Dr. Joshua Roose is a political sociologist and Associate Professor of Politics at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University,

Melbourne. His research focuses on the intersection of politics, law, sociology, and religion with an emphasis on political and religious violent extremism and terrorism. He is currently a Chief Investigator on an Australian Research Council (ARC) funded study ‘The Far Right: Intellectuals, Masculinity and Citizenship’ (2021–2023) and lead Chief Investigator of the ARC-funded project ‘Anti-Women online Movements; Pathways and Patterns of Participation’ (2022–2025).

Dr. Michael Flood is a Professor in the School of Justice at Queensland University of Technology. Dr. Flood’s research is focused on interpersonal violence and its prevention, and in particular on engaging men in violence prevention, and on men, masculinities, and gender justice. He has published widely on topics including violence against women and violence prevention, men and masculinities, pro-feminist men’s advocacy, male heterosexuality, fathering, and pornography. He has made a significant contribution to scholarly and community understanding of men’s and boys’ involvements in preventing violence against women and building gender equality.