

Identity, the Manosphere, and Misogyny: Unpacking the Digital Pipeline

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Abstract

Since 2022, public concern has grown over the “Manosphere,” an online network promoting male supremacy and radicalizing young men. Figures like Andrew Tate have amplified its influence, using social media to spread misogynistic and hyper-masculine ideals. Political figures like Donald Trump have harnessed the power of these manosphere figures to reach thousands of young men to secure a presidential election win. This study investigated how identity processes and Manosphere content consumption of college-aged males are linked to misogynistic beliefs. 130 participants from Tufts and Online forums completed an anonymous survey. Based on Marcia’s identity theory, Hegemonic Masculinity theory, and the Co-Construction model of media engagement, this research explores an individual’s identity processes is connected to their likelihood to engage with and internalize misogynistic beliefs.

Results found that there is a connection between Manosphere consumption and Manosphere beliefs for online participants, suggesting higher exposure leads to stronger ideological alignment in this group. Overall, findings suggest that while identity processes do not strongly predict Manosphere content consumption, belief in its ideology may be influenced by consumption levels, particularly for online users. The study highlights key differences between participant groups, indicating the need for further research on digital environments and ideological reinforcement.

Key words: Manosphere, Identity Processes, Misogyny, Social media, Alt-right politics, Incels

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Chapter 1: Problem Statement and Significance

Background

Since 2022, there has been a rise in public awareness and concern around the digital world of the “Manosphere,” its content creators, and the possible impact on young men. The general public’s awareness of the Manosphere took off in 2022 when videos of Andrew Tate started going viral on TikTok and Twitter (now X). In these videos, Tate expounded on his belief that women are inferior to men and that men need to stand up and become more masculine. Tate was soon after proclaimed “king of toxic masculinity” by the media (Valdez, 2022). His statements were not shocking to those familiar with the Manosphere: Tate was the embodiment of what had been brewing online for the last 20 years.

The Manosphere refers to a loose and ever-evolving group of content creators, forums, and ideologies that center around the belief in male supremacy. This corner of the internet is a complicated ecosystem of radicalization that created an insidious form of new-age misogyny (Regehr, Shaughnessy, Zhao, & Shaughnessy, 2024). News outlets have published accounts from families and teachers where, seemingly overnight, the young men in their lives turn into violent misogynists and quote Tate and his peers as justification (BBC, 2022; Dodgson & Dawson, 2023; Miller, 2023). The journey to falling down the Manosphere pipeline happens through a slow process that takes advantage of adolescent insecurities and social media algorithms that isolate young men and stoke hatred for those not in their sphere.

At its core, the Manosphere posits that men now face systemic oppression and decline directly due to the rise of women’s rights. These beliefs manifest as self-improvement through pseudoscience, calls for violent misogyny, entitlement, and degradation of anyone who does not adhere to the subculture’s rigid masculine ideals. The Manosphere is made up of four main

groups: pick-up artists (PUA), involuntary celibates (Incels), Men's Rights Activists (MRAs), and Men Go Their Own Way (MGTOW) (Bunting, 2023). The rise of internet forums and social media platforms has allowed for the cross-pollination of ideas across previously separate movements. Moreover, the rapid spread of information across social media platforms is intensified by bite-sized content like TikToks and Tweets facilitating the quick dissemination of Manosphere ideology. While this thesis focuses on the Manosphere, it is important to note that these communities overlap heavily with alt-right politics, conspiracy theories, and other fringe ideologies (Branch, 2024; Anti-Defamation League, 2018).

It's tempting to dismiss this content and its potential impact as something that only affects those who actively seek it out, but that's not entirely accurate. Today's youth are spending more time socializing online and are doing so at increasingly younger ages. From 2019 to 2021, overall screen time for both tweens and teens grew by 17%. For children between 8 to 12 years old, their screen time also increased by 17% from 2015 to 2021. The largest contributor to this uptick in screen time was attributed to watching online videos (Rideout, Peebles, Mann, & Robb, 2022). This increase was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic during which schools and other social activities were canceled due to lockdown. Increased internet use isn't inherently problematic, but unmonitored, unmoderated, and continuous social interactions on various platforms increase the likelihood of contact with problematic content.

Adolescence and early adulthood represent a crucial moment of socialization and identity formation. The current standard best practices for supporting healthy identity formation are based on research that was conducted in offline settings. Even existing media research is centered on more traditional forms of media like TV, books, and movies, which are highly curated and edited. Social media can provide unsupervised sources of information and

interaction that represent a risk for vulnerable users like teenagers who may be more susceptible to radicalization (Mughal, DeMarinis, Nordendahl, Lone, Phillips, & Boyd-MacMillan, 2023).

This study investigated the possible connection between identity status, content consumption, and agreement with Manosphere beliefs. The effectiveness of Manosphere messaging relies on an existing doubt in the viewers' sense of identity. Thus, an adolescent's identity status could be a driving factor for why young adults seek out and become radicalized by this content.

Theoretical framework

Identity development is the process through which individuals identify with role models and develop a sense of self, personal values, and goals (Klimstra & van Doeselaar, 2017).

Identity development begins in late childhood and continues through early adulthood. During this time role models and socialization play a large role in shaping an individual's identity.

Social media may affect identity development by creating opportunities for curated and critiqued self-presentation, social comparison, and access to role models (Pérez-Torres, 2024).

Foundational literature on identity development on social media focuses on how social media supports existing pro-or anti-social behaviors. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of social media research, this thesis is based on theoretical frameworks across psychology, sociology, and communications.

This thesis uses Connell and Messerschmidt's Hegemonic Masculinity Theory to determine which Manosphere creators will be included in the study. This theory states that masculinity is "a societal pattern in which stereotypically male traits are idealized as the masculine cultural ideal, explaining how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women and other groups considered to be feminine" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In this context, this study

presented a list of Manosphere figures that prop up the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. The innate danger of how the Manosphere propagates hegemonic masculinity and the social punishments for not adhering to it, is that it cannot be “digitally contained or localized” (Jane, 2017). Social media platforms provide a low barrier to entry for communities to form and to spread hate speech. Some platforms have moderators and Natural Language Processing (NLP) models that seek out and remove content that violates their community guidelines, but the rapid development of in-group slang and meme-ification of hateful ideals make it difficult to fully detect and contain Manosphere content. Additionally, platforms like Meta’s Instagram and Facebook have lowered their content moderation standards and removed fact-checking in response to Trump’s 2024 presidential victory (de Brún & Sawyeddollah, 2025). This will enable Manosphere content, especially those that rely on misinformation, to reach broader audiences. Manosphere ideals are spread to other more “mainstream” parts of the internet through parody videos, memes, and by those who seek to spread awareness of the hateful content. However, we see that even making fun of Manosphere content and phrases leads to normalization by downplaying the severity of the underlying misogynistic ideals. Additionally, Manosphere creators and their followers go to non-Manosphere spaces to harass others, force moderation at the expense of the original content, or force non-Manosphere spaces to indulge in conversations about their ideals which furthers their reach and impact (i.e. Gamergate¹ and other hate raids).

The way Hegemonic Masculinity Theory relates to identity development can be explained by Erikson’s Psychosocial stages. This is especially true for the adolescence and young adult stages that encompass experimentation and development of identity, and establishing intimate

¹ Gamergate was a hate campaign organized and executed against female video game streamers as a backlash to feminism and the #MeToo movement.

relationships respectively. The role confusion that is present in the adolescence stage of development means that if a teen is unsure or insecure about their place in the world, their values, or certainty in their future, they could have trouble developing their identity. Some teen boys will turn to the internet for support wherein the Manosphere operates through a network of “gurus”. Manosphere figures like Andrew Tate play on the anxiety of young men to make them think that hegemonic masculinity is the way to achieve their economic and relationship goals (Haslop, Ringrose, Cambazoglu, & Milne, 2024).

Connections and relationships with media figures combined with the adolescent and young adult desire for social desirability can lead to modeling behaviors observed in media (Bandura, 2001). A 2024 study on the connection between digital media and identity stated that “media figures are social references for different identity domains that offer inspiration for self-development, self-esteem, and the exploration of different roles: vocational, gender, and sexual orientation” (Pérez-Torres, 2024). Where Erikson’s theory of identity development resides in social contexts focusing on identity development via resolving the “conflict between synthesis and confusion,” Marcia’s exploration and commitment explains adaption or maladaptation of pro-or anti-social behavior tied to an identity status (Iwasa, Hihara, Ishizaki, Yasui, Hiro, & Sugimura, 2023). If an individual ages out of the identity crisis/formation stage without successful identity development/resolution, they may be stuck in identity confusion and have little sense of life purpose or role. Early adulthood is a vulnerable period, and during this time, some individuals turn to Manosphere content to find a sense of community and seek answers to help them cope with their perceived vulnerabilities (Botto & Gottzén, 2023).

Finally, this study adapted Subrahmanyam’s Model of Co-Construction to show how negative online engagement can lead to alignment with anti-social behaviors. The Co-

Construction model has already been used to make the connection between online engagement and pro-social behavior (Iwasa, Hihara, Ishizaki, Yasui, Hiro, & Sugimura, 2023). The Co-Construction model states that adolescents don't simply exist within digital environments, but that they actively build their internet experiences through their choices of content and social interactions. This is a departure from the traditional Media Effects Theory that believes content affects an individual's attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts (Valkenburg, Peter, & Walther, 2017). The idea that individuals are active participants in their digital environments highlights that they not only have agency in the content they consume but that they are contributing to the creation and spread of content. Subrahmanyam believes that adolescents are co-constructing their experiences online based on their offline lives and that it can be expected that "their online and offline worlds to be connected; consequently, digital worlds may serve as a playing ground for important developmental issues from offline lives" (Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011, p.34).

The main concern with the Manosphere is not simply that young men are looking for community online. The issue is that the so-called "community" they find is, at best, selling them false promises and, at worst, actively radicalizing an entire generation to harbor hatred toward women, societal institutions, and even themselves. It is a self-destructive prophecy that needs to be taken more seriously by parents, policy-makers, and academics. It is easy to laugh at those who "fall" for PUA gurus and Incel ideologies but we all live with the consequences of those who become victims of this. This is especially true in a post-2024 election landscape where we see universities losing funding and bending to the will of an administration whose ideology is rooted in the Manosphere (Blinder & Bender, 2025).

It is important to understand the connection between content consumption, identity, and worldview. This is especially important to understand because when tech companies look to

academics for recommendations on how to solve this issue, we cannot just say that they should block this content. The “taboo-ing” of certain topics without understanding the root cause may drive the content further underground and take vulnerable audiences with it. We have to understand why this content is something from which teen boys obtain information that derives their identity and how it affects them so that we may make research-backed recommendations on how to improve digital literacy, education, and support for this vulnerable group.

The Manosphere is composed of several themes of beliefs and interests with many online groups. However, the foundational belief that underpins the entire ecosystem is the supremacy of men centered on misogynistic ideals. This study will focus on the misogynistic roots of the Manosphere as the intent of this study is to understand the root cause of Manosphere consumption, it is important to hone in on the foundation before exploring the branches of this ecosystem.

Problem Statement

This thesis sought to address a gap in the existing literature by specifically focusing on the possible effects of specific Manosphere content on college-aged males. I developed a survey-based study to examine how the consumption of Manosphere content might connect to young adult males’ identity processes. This study focused on male participants to address the gap in the existing literature on this demographic.

By conducting this study, I addressed the following research questions:

- 1) Do college-aged males with low levels of commitment consume more Manosphere content than those with high level of commitment?
- 2) To what extent does the consumption of misogynistic Manosphere content influence the belief in misogynistic ideas among college-aged males?

I hypothesized that identity development status would play a role across all three of my research questions. More specifically I hypothesized that:

- 1) College-aged males who display low commitment and high levels of exploration (as defined by a composite score of breadth and depth) will have higher rates of Manosphere content consumption as they are the demographic more likely to feel insecure in their identity and will seek out the “guru” advice at the beginning of the Manosphere pipeline.
- 2) Overall, college-aged males who consume high levels of misogynistic content will have stronger beliefs in Manosphere ideology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Taking a step back, the general landscape of research on adolescents and social media can be broken down into three thematic areas: screen time, negative body image in teen girls, and social media addiction. There is a growing body of research focused on the civic engagement of youth that often uses social media as a point of connection with young adult audiences. The literature is lacking in areas that focus specifically on impacts on male adolescent development beyond the use of video games leading to violent behaviors. However, there is a growing body of research on specific subcommunities that have primarily male audiences and how these spaces may foster negative self-perception and anti-social behaviors that bleed into offline life.

Identity Development and Socialization Online

As stated earlier, overall screen time for teens and tweens has greatly increased between the period from 2019 to 2021. While some of the rise in screen time during this period can be linked to the pandemic, numerous studies show that screen time and social media use have not

declined since stay-at-home orders ended; indeed, some assessments demonstrate that screen time has only continued to grow. One study found that both recreational and education screen time increased since the pandemic, including a post-pandemic period, with recreational screen time increasing by 1:59 hours/day (Hedderson et al., 2023). A meta-analysis of 46 studies found a 52% increase in screen time (84 min/day). For individuals aged 12 to 18 years, screen time increased by 110 minutes/day during the COVID-19 pandemic. This change showed significant increases in screen time across age groups and device types (Madigan, Eirich, Pador, McArthur, & Neville, 2022).

Identity development and socialization in online spaces do not exist in a vacuum. Children who use social media for the first time bring the social norms and perspectives from their offline lives to online spaces where they have these norms and perspectives either reinforced or challenged. Through this process of interaction and adaptation, children and adolescents form their sense of digital self over time. Exploration is a natural part of identity development and online interactions can help to reinforce positive development or maladaptive development. Especially salient in online identity development is continuous feedback on a user's self-presentation. The most prominent examples of this feedback are the likes and comments on a post. Most social platforms allow some form of audience engagement whether it is the like button on Instagram or chat on Twitch. An adolescent will have their image, words, and other choices validated by others by getting lots of likes or they may experience pushback in the comment section that could contribute to a change in their identity presentation. This is also reinforced by content that teens may see where they may perceive that a controversial opinion is widely accepted if the comment or chat section is reacting favorably to the content. This was demonstrated when Manosphere figure, Nick Fuentes, tweeted "Your body, my choice. Forever."

after Trump's reelection in 2024. While many people reacted in disgust at this post, there were over 51,000 likes far outpacing the 20,000 comments (many of which were agreeing with the sentiment). [Figure 1]

Social media allows teens to perform self-presentation and receive multiple forms of feedback from the audience which impacts how teens think about themselves, a process known as self-concept validation. Additionally, adolescents will see how digital role models are behaving and being received. This is particularly apparent with Manosphere figures who present talking points or model lifestyles that are shaped by an idealized form of masculinity as defined by the Manosphere. Examples of this are videos claiming that Ben Shapiro "owned libs", Dan Bilzerian using bikini models and guns as props on this Instagram page, and Andrew Tate claiming that it's okay to rape women. While some comments and responses criticize these creators, there are equally as many comments under their posts that support their viewpoints. Through the observation of these reactions, adolescents will internalize these beliefs as part of the context for adolescent identity development (Pérez-Torres, 2024). We see that the impact of these influencers can be significant. A 2020 study by the UK-based advocacy group Hope not Hate, found that 62% of young men 16-24 years old believe that "feminism has gone too far and makes it harder for men to succeed" (Carter, 2020). This study's findings highlighted many other Manosphere talking points and demonstrated how these online creators can shape youths' values and potentially lead to the development of harmful attitudes and beliefs.

The key developmental task in adolescence is identity development. A 2021 study stated that "identity development during adolescence and early adulthood is characterized by both systematic maturation and substantial stability" (Branje, de Moor, Spitzer, & Becht, 2021). In the dual-cycle identity models there are identity formation and maintenance cycles and in those

cycles several types of exploration and commitment play a role. During identity formation, individuals attempt to establish commitments and actively consider possible outcomes to their identity or life path (exploration in breadth). In the identity evaluation cycle, individuals reflect on and evaluate their identity or life path options (exploration in depth) and “identification with commitment” (Klimstra & van Doeselaar, 2017). During this time, personal identity and social identity are strongly intertwined and for some, their self-concept comes from their associations with the groups they belong to. For an adolescent who is seeking community and understanding, their integration of these two identities will be stronger than an individual who feels secure in their identity (Branje, S., de Moor, E. L., Spitzer, J., & Becht, A. I. 2021).

However, while social media can be a tool for the exploration of identity, it can also reinforce and narrow self-perception through filter (content) bubbles. Research on offline group-forming behaviors has shown that it takes very little for a group to form and that the group connections can be quite strong. Additionally, a core part of social identity is the idea of self-categorization in which an individual internalizes their group identity and thinks of themselves as part of that group (Turner, 1985; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). This is particularly apparent in online spaces, especially stan culture², in which these in-groups create specific language to communicate between group members.

This prioritization of the group over the self leads to depersonalization and further enmeshment of the group ideals into an individual’s self-concept (Kaakinen, Sirola, Savolainen, & Oksanen, 2018). Other studies have found that those who prefer online interactions over in-person interactions are more likely to do so out of dissatisfaction with their offline life and are

² Stan culture refers to the extreme and often blind support of fans surrounding particular artists, pop-culture figures, etc.

more likely to identify themselves by their group association instead of their identity (Kaakinen, Sirola, Savolainen, & Oksanen, 2018).

Exploring the Manosphere

The existing literature on the Manosphere is a combination of news articles, policy briefs, and content analysis on the evolution of language in this internet community. There is limited psychological research on the effects of Manosphere (or its subgroups) on adolescents and young adults. Although the research is limited, the general interdisciplinary consensus is that it is a response/backlash to the perceived increase in status that women have gained in the world.

Three key components of the Manosphere can impact the socialization and identity of teen boys:

1. Specialized language of indoctrination
2. Dehumanization of both members and outsiders
3. Violence

Appropriation and Proliferation of Language

Language is a major part of how the Manosphere community avoids detection by content moderation algorithms, creates a sense of ingroup, and spreads their ideology into the mainstream. Beyond the slang and meme-talk, participants in the Manosphere feed into the idea that they are the victims by using the language of the oppressed (Regehr, Shaughnessy, Zhao, & Shaughnessy, 2024). Additional studies cite how the perception of male suppression due to women's societal advancement has spilled over into schools. A group of studies done in Australian schools highlighted how male grade school students have been observed using Manosphere rhetoric in their direct attacks on and justification of abuse towards female staff

(Wescott, Roberts, & Zhao, 2023). The teachers in this study on the resurgence of male supremacy highlighted how boys in their classes would use “jokes” and “humor” to start a conversation about Andrew Tate that ultimately ends with the dismissal and debate of women’s rights. This is an example of how the culture of meme-ifying Manosphere figures perpetuates misogyny in offline spaces. The use of jokes and memes reduce the severity of Manosphere ideology so that people feel more comfortable speaking casually about misogynistic ideals. In one example of the reorientation of adolescent males’ views and attitudes towards women, Australian teachers said in interviews that “Tate has skewed boys’ understanding of dynamics of social power; that boys see themselves as disempowered by the contemporary feminist movement and recent social phenomena such as #metoo” (Wescott, Roberts, & Zhao, 2023).

As adolescent males become steeped in the language of the Manosphere, they can also begin to objectify themselves and others. It is common to read about these digital spaces and see only the negative conversations about women, but equally as often there are conversations about other men who do not live up the hegemonic masculine standards. An entire language of “beta males” versus “chads” and hundreds of forums to share advice on looksmaxxing³ has now spread beyond the confines of the Manosphere. The consequence of language normalization means that those who are deeply ingrained in these misogynistic spaces see their views validated in the use of their in-group terms by those in the out-group. Even the ironic use of these terms helps to create the environment for others to learn about these terms and the ideology behind them (Regehr, Shaughnessy, Zhao, & Shaughnessy, 2024).

³ Looksmaxxing is one of the options for self-improvement in the Manosphere. Those who seek to improve their physical appearance will undergo a series of changes to “glow up”, often through seeking advice from online forums. Changes included weight loss, cosmetic procedures, and wardrobe changes.

Focus on constant self-improvement is not native to the Manosphere but adherents have adopted it into an “extreme self-help culture” that has spread beyond this ecosystem through “soft” cultural artifacts. Soft cultural artifacts take the form of memes, parodies, jokes, and other content that in its original intent seeks to mock the Manosphere but unintentionally masks the true meaning. In an interview study, teenagers highlighted how pervasive this type of content has become and how difficult it is to “identify the points of indoctrination or influence” (Regehr, Shaughnessy, Zhao, & Shaughnessy, 2024). The impact of this has been that Manosphere content has spread to other parts of the internet in “bite-sized, digestible, and entertaining chunks” that essentially help new audiences micro dose misogyny leading to a the “mass normalizing of sexism and hate” (Regehr, Shaughnessy, Zhao, & Shaughnessy, 2024). The purpose of social media algorithms is to keep users engaged and on platform for as long as possible. Bite-sized chunks of content that act as “rage-bait”⁴ lead to longer stay duration which in turn leads to higher engagement with enraging content which spreads it farther and faster. This snowball effect normalizes Manosphere content by spreading and reducing the shock factor of this content on its way to a more receptive audience.

Dehumanization and Degradation

The Manosphere masquerades as a community of like-minded individuals. Still, at its core, it’s about the exclusion of everyone who does not fit their definition of masculinity and picking apart those who seek to model themselves to an impossible standard. While this online ecosystem does not necessarily always overlap with nationalist extremism, the values and language within this space eerily mimic those of white nationalists.

⁴ Rage bait is online content that is created to intentionally trigger extreme and angry responses from viewers. The goal is often to drive traffic and engagement as people react to and widely share this content.

Although there is a gap in the literature around online misogyny and teen boys, there are studies that highlight the pervasiveness of the degradation of teen girls by their peers through the sharing of non-consensual images. Sharing intimate photos gets teen males social currency with others as “proof of their heterosexuality” and furthers their “access to hegemonic masculinity through misogyny” (Haslop & O’Rourke, 2021; Ringrose et al., 2013, 2021; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015).

Even within the Manosphere, there are downstream effects of language as a way to dominate others. Within the incel community, the language around “Virgins, Chads, Beckys, and Stacys” divides up desirable men and women, from those who are lacking and undeserving of companionship (Gothard, Dewhurst, Minot, Adams, Danforth, & Dodds, 2021). Incels have even co-opted pseudo-scientific language from biology by dividing up those who are sexually “successful” as “Alphas, Betas, and Omegas”. Recently, a new archetype of the “Sigma” has been coined to describe someone who is so masculine that they don’t need a community and are a “lone wolf” type. Worse still, incels have a hierarchy based on race and use terms like “curry-cel” and “rice-cel” to describe how South East Asian and Asian men have lower “sexual market value”⁵. The racial hierarchy of the Manosphere upholds Western ideals of hegemonic masculinity. It perpetuates racist stereotypes that are a part of the broader alt-right radicalization pipeline that the Manosphere exists within. This form of in-group stratification further functions to dehumanize and degrade members of the community, with its effects extending into offline and non-Manosphere interactions.

⁵ Sexual Market Value (SMV) is a pseudo-metric used in the Incel and Redpill community to define a person’s worth in the sexual marketplace and their ability to find a mate (partner).

Calls for Violence

The Manosphere's final form exists as what some have deemed hostile sexism (Dickel & Evolvi, 2022). Despite the rise of women's rights and access to social power, gender inequality still exists and "manifests as violence towards women" and this violence is increasingly observed in younger populations, including teen girls (Bermejo, Sánchez, Aguado, & García-Navarro, 2021). Key Manosphere figures like Andrew Tate and Eliot Rogers have shown the culmination of their misogynistic beliefs enacted through violence against women. Tate was arrested in 2023 for kidnapping, abuse, and trafficking of women and Rodgers killed seven people and injured fourteen others in his attempt to enter a sorority house to get revenge against women for his perceived sexual rejection. Violence has become so normalized in Tate's content that a 2023 study found that viewers of Tate's videos believed that it was acceptable to hurt others so long as they apologized afterward (Women's Aid, 2023).

Even after Tate's arrest, Twitter users were seen calling for his freedom with "#FreeTopG" (one of Tate's pseudonyms) trending multiple times following his arrest. After Rodger's 2014 attack, some members of the incel community lionized him and proclaimed a "Saint Elliot Day" in his honor (Chan, 2022). Following this attack, there have been several mass killings by individuals who self-identified as incels, including a 2018 attack in which the perpetrator appeared to applaud Rodger on Facebook before driving a van into a group of people in Toronto. Robert Lawson, a sociolinguistic researcher, observed that the perpetrators in five other attacks shared male supremacist and incel-related content before committing these acts of violence (Lawson, 2023). After the 2018 Toronto attack, Jordan Peterson advocated for "enforced monogamy" as the "cure" for the reason behind this attack (Kelly, DiBranco, & DeCook, 2021). Peterson is a prime example of a Manosphere figure who has become known

beyond this community and acts as a point of magnification and normalization for Manosphere ideology.

The in-group/out-group problem

Henri Tajfel proposed the Social Identity Theory in which people define part of their self-concept with their membership in certain groups (Neighbors, Foster, & Fossos, 2013). This identification with a group also impacts how people view those within and outside of their membership groups. The perception of who is in the in/out-group is subjective and fluid depending on the broader social values that someone grows up in. However, the polarization that the in/out group dichotomy creates sets up a mentality where “in-group” members will seek to uplift their interests while denigrating the interests of the “out-group”.

The original view of the Social Identity Theory was that those who found themselves in the “out-group” would face shame and have social motivation to work towards becoming part of the “in-group”. However, the research on the process of radicalization and terrorist groups shows that social exclusion from the “in-group” is a key factor in recruiting and enmeshing an individual into the “out-group”. The bridge from the process of radicalization to violence is radicalism. Radicalism involves “a readiness to engage in illegal and violent political action” (Moskalenko & McCaluey, 2009). Although it may seem extreme to connect the process of radicalization and radicalism to violent action, there have been several public instances of Incels engaging in violence due to their misogynistic beliefs, like Eliot Rodgers.

The Staircase to Terrorism Model highlights the six “levels” of the radicalization process which include (1) perceptions of injustice and feelings of frustration and (2) displacement of aggression to the [perceived] perpetrators of injustice (Moghaddam, 2005). A 2022 review of empirical studies showed that social exclusion was a pre-condition present across several

theories of radicalization (Pfundmair, Wood, Hales, & Wesselmann, 2022). Similarly, a 2014 literature review found that those who were ostracized by an “in-group” would seek out other groups to address their social needs (Knapton, 2014). The literature showed that this “quest for significance” might make people more vulnerable to the social influence of negative groups.

In the context of the Manosphere, the perceived injustice is the belief that due to women and feminism, men have a harder time succeeding in life. The themes of success vary but often fall under the buckets of dating/sex success and financial success. As they believe they cannot find acceptance in mainstream society, members of the Manosphere find community online. Here, the group formation creates an echo chamber that strengthens group identity. Over time, this continued isolation, degradation of outsiders, and reinforcement by group members create the radicalization pipeline.

Reinforcing Labels

Society tends to label phenomena like “toxic masculinity” to name and shame the leaders of these movements and their believers. However, several theories across psychology, communications, and criminology have shown that these labels can amplify negative ideologies and groups. Brehm’s Reactance Theory states that when an individual’s perceived freedom of choice is being restricted, they become psychologically motivated to reclaim that freedom (Brehm, 1966). This reclamation can often manifest in hostile responses from a person whose choice is under attack.

A similar phenomenon happens at scale with the Streisand Effect. Here, the ban or attempted ban on discussing or sharing about a certain topic often leads to the opposite effect (Jansen & Martin, 2015). In a 2008 essay on the history of censorship, Antoon De Baets writes that one of the effects of censorship is that it “may not suppress alternative views but rather

generate them, and, by doing so, become counterproductive.” (De Baets, 2008, p. 21). Backfiring censorship can be seen in several instances of Manosphere and far-right figures. Andrew Tate’s ban from social media platforms for his hateful rhetoric led to a sharp increase in content made about him. Often people were discussing if a ban was fair, highlighting what Andrew Tate posted about, to make their points in agreement or disagreement with the ban. This showed that de-platforming Tate backfired as there was far more content being made about him after the ban and that more people were becoming aware of him and his message.

Finally, we can look to criminology research to see how Deviance Amplification can also contribute to the attractiveness of anti-social groups. Deviance Amplification is used to describe how society’s reaction to deviance or crime can contribute to an increase in levels of individual deviancy (Wilkins, 1964). Labeling behavior as deviant in combination with moral panic by the media can lead to increased membership in labeled groups. Stanley Cohen wrote about this phenomenon in 1972 when describing how the media’s reaction to punks and mods led to these groups seeing themselves as enemies which further fueled their violent actions and perpetuated the media’s negative narratives of these groups (Cohen, 1972). Moral panic fuels the societal pressure that supports the amplification of deviance. We saw this repeated in the 80s/90s with the PMCR’s war on explicit lyrics, and now in the 2020s with QAnon’s political conspiracy theories. All of these moral panics sought to address a perceived issue in society but ultimately led to increased public awareness of deviant beliefs and contributed to support or membership of these groups.

Similar Phenomena

The idea that digital content radicalizes and influences viewers is not isolated to the Manosphere. There are several examples in the last few years of how digital media and social

platforms have been used to recruit people to join anti-social groups. The Bethnal Green Trio was a group of teen girls from the UK who were allegedly radicalized by ISIS blogger Aqsa Mahmood (Fisher, 2019). These three teens ran away from home to travel to Syria and joined ISIS. The most prominent of the three, Shamima Begum, became the center of an international citizenship debate after being stripped of her UK and Bangladeshi citizenships (BBC, 2024). More recently, the Proud Boys, a white supremacist group, have turned to social media to bolster their recruitment. After Trump's felony indictment in 2024, the Ohio chapter of the Proud Boys posted several videos to social media that showcased past fights with the slogan "fighting solves everything" (Roston, 2024). Even before this, the Proud Boys took part in political violence and were notably present on January 6th (Office of Public Affairs, 2023). A former chairman of the Proud Boys, Enrique Tarrio, was prominently featured in a Vice YouTube Documentary that reached 1.8 million viewers around the world (Vice, 2019). Tarrio was later arrested and charged for his role in the January 6th attacks and maintained a social media presence to continue spreading the Proud Boys message online.

A Comment on Politics

We cannot discuss the Manosphere without acknowledging the intersection with far-right politics. As previously discussed, one of the appeals of the Manosphere is that it promises to address insecurities and explain why others (typically women) are at fault for the lack of prosperity of young men. This is the same premise used by Donald Trump and many MAGA politicians. MAGA relies on the rhetoric of economic nationalism, traditional gender values, and an anti-establishment stance that relies on the degradation of legacy institutions (especially healthcare and education). The Manosphere and MAGA share ideological foundations that reject equality, emphasize traditional views of masculinity, and position their followers as superior to

the “sheep”⁶ who believe in mainstream media. The online presence of both groups and their methods of recruitment, specifically othering and denigrating non-cis, het, white men, capitalize on the insecurities of men about their place in society. They offer simple solutions to complex issues that give followers a false sense of security in the leaders of these groups. Finally, the shared rhetoric of these groups is centered around reclaiming “heritage” values with the slogans “Make America Great Again” and the focus of the Manosphere of helping men regain their lost dominance (Bujalka, Rich, & Bender, 2022).

The impact of the Manosphere in politics cannot be overstated. During the 2024 US elections, Donald Trump took advantage of the shifting media landscape to court the “bro vote” with the support of several Manosphere figures. Amidst the media’s focus on the male loneliness epidemic, both Trump and the Manosphere have promised young men a community that will center their prosperity while also shifting the blame for complex issues like mental health and wage stagnation to women and immigrants. Trump took advantage of the existing audience of Manosphere podcasters like Joe Rogan, The Nelk Boys, and the Paul Brothers. While these creators are not immediately identifiable as part of the Manosphere like Peterson or Tate, they exist as part of the Manosphere pipeline that introduces young men to Manosphere ideology through jokes, guests, and playing the devil’s advocate [Figure 2]. Trump even tapped into traditionally masculine franchises like the UFC through his relationship with Dana White. In post-mortems of the MAGA campaign strategy, it was stated that Trump’s college-aged son Barron was consulted to figure out which “edgy” podcasts the campaign should book appearances on (Cortellessa, 2024).

⁶ Sheep is a derogatory nickname used in online spaces to refer to those who blindly follow the herd. It is often used in the alt-right to refer to liberals whom they perceive as following every social justice cause without thought.

This connection between politics and social media highlights one of the positive impacts of social media on youth: civic engagement. Since social media is the primary way that youth get their news information and community connections, it has been a formidable force for mobilizing teenagers and young adults to various causes (Ofcom 2022). We have seen the rise of the BLM movement, #MeToo, and Fridays for the Future, all of which started on social media and were galvanized by the ability to connect youth. However, there is evidence to show that social media contributes to misinformation campaigns, impacts voter turnout, and sways voter sentiment (Green, Hobbs, McCabe, & Lazer, 2022). This is where the Manosphere uses the same mechanisms for civil engagement to separate their audience from their positive communities to further their broader goals for social control.

Overall, the Manosphere is a complex network of creators and viewers. They've developed their own language and hierarchy that has allowed them to spread their views and influence the outcome of institutions offline. It cannot be overstated how important it is to understand the root cause of why young men engage with the Manosphere. It is one thing to address the content at a policy level but if we do not address the psychological reason for engagement then we cannot create meaningful interventions for young men who have fallen into this toxic community and stop others from becoming victims to it.

At the time of writing, we are already several months into the second Trump administration that has aided in the spread and normalization of certain types of Manosphere Content. In 2025, the Trump administration allowed the Tate Brothers, who are currently under investigation for trafficking and sexual assault in Europe, back into the US. This study was conducted during a cultural context of shifting success metrics for young men and women. A 2024 study by the Financial Times found that young women are starting to leave men behind.

Looking at data from the UK, US, Canada, and France, researchers found that now more than ever young men in these countries are likely to be seen outside the economy. In other words, they are not currently enrolled in education, seeking a job, or working (Burn-Murdoch, 2024). Another WSJ article found that American Men in their 20s and 30s say they feel more “aimless and isolated”. More young men spend time alone, live with their parents, and are less likely to be employed as compared to their female counterparts (Wolfe, 2024). This has created a “crisis of purpose” for young men which has implications for how they vote, treat women, and see their role in society. At the same time, we are seeing young men globally support right-wing political parties and an increase in violence.

We are also seeing the rollback of DEI programs under the new administration with corporations and academic institutions bending to the will of Trump. A prominent example of this was Mark Zuckerberg’s appearance on the Joe Rogan Experience in early 2025. Zuckerberg stated that he believes that companies need more “masculine energy”. This comes during a time when women’s rights across the world are being rolled back and his statements are reflective of how those in the Manosphere are reacting to threats to the patriarchy.

Part of this trend of women becoming increasingly financially liberated is that they have less of an economic need to seek out relationships with men. The decrease in marriages in the Western world is something that the Manosphere has blamed women and feminism for as the reason why men are not succeeding.

Jordan Peterson met with Pierre Poilievre, the far-right candidate to become the next Prime Minister of Canada in an interview shortly after Donald Trump began discussing the possibility of Canada becoming the 51st state. In this nearly 2-hour long interview, Jordan Peterson was able to signal to his followers, many of whom are deeply embedded in the Manosphere that Poilievre

was the best choice to lead Canada. This interview has garnered over 5 million views in 2 months which is an indicator for virality on YouTube (Jordan B Peterson, 2025). Additionally, Gavin Newsom, Democratic Governor of California went on Charlie Kirk's podcast and said that his 13-year-old son is Charlie Kirk's "biggest fan". Charlie Kirk is a long-time far-right commentator and the face of conservative political action group, Turning Point USA. Newsom even went so far as to say that his son wanted to skip school to meet Kirk. This podcast episode highlights that even parents who are left-leaning and politically savvy are not able to stop the spread of the Manosphere into their own homes (Charlie Kirk, 2025).

In 2023, the annual survey from the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future found that 25% of male high school seniors identified as conservative or very conservative. Additionally, only 13% of surveyed males identified as liberal or very liberal. This signals a massive shift that has been ongoing for the last decade with young men shifting right while young women shift further left (Visé, 2023).

Chapter 3: Methods

Participants and Recruitment

This study focused on college-aged males, specifically targeting 18 to 21-years-old. The rationale for this demographic approach was twofold. First, obtaining consent from minors is more challenging and the sensitive nature of this survey could have limited the number of eligible participants. Second, individuals aged 18 through 21 are often in college which is a period of significant transition where identity development is ongoing (Kunnen, 2010). I recruited US-based participants who identify as male and are 18 through 21 years old. The criteria for participating in this study were a) identifying as male b) being 18 through 21 years old and c) having at least one social media account they actively use (creation is not a limiting

factor). In the end, the sample consisted of 130 individuals who met the criteria and fully completed the survey.

I reached out to Tufts University professors who taught undergraduate courses and provided messaging they could post to Canvas along with the survey link. Additionally, I recruited participants by placing flyers in high traffic zones like dorm common rooms, bathrooms, and inside library study rooms.

However, due to the educational background of Tufts undergrads, some might have come from progressive high schools that include character and diversity education in their curriculum. There was a risk that the Tufts population might not include people who consume Manosphere content or who are willing to be honest about misogynistic beliefs. To expand my participant pool, I posted a link to the study survey on Reddit and Discord. The surveys were anonymous and had additional screening questions to ensure that participants were over 18 and based in the US. Although I sought to collect an equal ratio of Tufts and Online respondents, the actual sample consisted of 71 Tufts students and 59 Online participants. Data was collected between November of 2024 and February of 2025.

To obtain truthful responses, I concealed the intent of this study in the flyer. Participants were told that this study was looking at the intersection of career paths and consumption of content from different social media personalities. At the end of the survey, a debriefing page highlighted the true scope of this study and allowed participants to decline continued participation in the study. The debrief letter clearly stated that this study sought to understand the digital media viewing behaviors of college-aged males and that the researcher was a Masters student at Tufts University.

Procedures

The survey was conducted via Qualtrics survey and assessed participants' demographic details, social media use, familiarity with Manosphere and Manosphere adjacent creators, comfort with identity, and perspectives on misogynistic scenarios. The entire study was completed via the survey link. After a participant received the link to the survey, they were taken to an electronic consent form. Once a participant consented to participate in the study, they could begin the survey. Participants had an unlimited time to complete the survey once they started. The survey took about 15 minutes to complete.

Constructs and Measures

I used a quantitative approach to assess a) consumption of Manosphere content (self and social circle), b) identity processes, and c) Manosphere beliefs. The survey consisted of 14 questions combined from five existing questionnaires. The measures are as follows:

Identity Processes

This measure was adapted from the Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS) (Luyckx, Schwartz, Berzonsky, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Smits, & Goossens, 2008; Iwasa, Hihara, Ishizaki, Yasui, Hiro, & Sugimura, 2023). This measure presents identity development across 5 dimensions, with 3 stages of exploration and 2 stages of commitment making: 1. commitment making 2. identification with commitment 3. exploration in breadth 4. exploration in depth 5. ruminative exploration. For this study, the DIDS questions were truncated to a set of 9 across commitment, exploration in depth, and exploration in breadth. The brevity of questions and expanded response options were done to improve the likelihood of participants completing the survey and the likelihood of honesty in responses. For the analysis, three composite identity processes scores were created: 1) Commitment, 2) Exploration in Depth, and

3) Exploration in Breadth. The means for the collective scores across each identity category was taken to create a single score for that identity process. The following questions were in each category:

Commitment

- *I have decided on the direction I want to follow in life.*
- *I know what I want to do with my future.*
- *My plans for the future offer me a sense of security.*

Exploration in depth

- *I think about the future plans I have made.*
- *I try to find out regularly what other people think about the specific direction I want to take in my life.*
- *I worry about what I want to do with my future. (Ruminative exploration)*

Exploration in breadth

- *I talk regularly with people in my real life about my plans for the future.*
- *I talk regularly with people online about my plans for the future.*
- *I look to those online to see if the goals I put forward in life are a good idea.*

Manosphere Consumption

This measure listed figures in and adjacent to the Manosphere based on a list compiled Media Matters and other news articles as of Fall 2024 (Horowitz, 2023). This list also included non-Manosphere influencers to act as a red herring and an attention check. The figures chosen for this section represented the spread of Manosphere beliefs across, politics, gender roles, self-improvement, and pseudo-science. For the analysis, a composite measure was created. This composite score started with each of the creators (15) receiving a consumption score between 1 (never) through 5 (daily). Each participant got a total score with a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 75. Based on an initial evaluation of the distribution a final composition score was created by grouping consumption into the following categories: Score of 0-15 = 0 (never

consume any Manosphere content), Scores of 16 thru 20 = 1 (low), Scores of 21 thru 27 = 2 (med), and Scores of 28 or greater = 3 (high).

Social Circle Manosphere Consumption

This measure repeated the questions on Manosphere Consumption but asked participants to reflect on whether their friends and family have mentioned the creators. Social circle was added for two reasons. The first was to act as a proxy for self-reported Manosphere consumption. Due to the nature of Manosphere content, some participants may feel pressured by social desirability bias to skew their viewing habits and may feel more comfortable reporting their friends and family's viewing habits (or even misrepresent their own viewing habits for others). The second reason for this question was to investigate the possible influence, if any, of social circle viewing habits on a participant's alignment with Manosphere beliefs. A Pew Research study on political media consumption found that people with consistent ideological views are more likely to have friends who share the same political opinions (Mitchell, Gottfried, Kiely, & Matsa, 2014). This suggests that the media habits of one's social circle likely align with their own media consumption or their political beliefs. As mentioned throughout this study, the Manosphere is aligned with the political right in the United States and often has overlapping figures.

For the analysis, the composite score from Manosphere consumption (self) was replicated. This composite score starts with each of the creators (15) receiving a consumption score between 1 (never) through 5 (daily). Then each participant got a total score with a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 75. Based on an initial evaluation of the distribution a final composition score was created by grouping consumption into the following categories: Score of

0- 15 = 0 (never consume any Manosphere content), Scores of 16 thru 20 = 1 (low), Scores of 21 thru 27 = 2 (med), and Scores of 28 or greater = 3 (high).

Manosphere Beliefs

This was measured by the Misogyny Scale which measures beliefs against three dimensions: the manipulative nature of women, distrust of women, and devaluation of women (Rottweiler & Gill, 2021). Questions from this scale were adapted to match the language of the Manosphere and Incel forums (Kelly, DiBranco, & DeCook, 2021). An additional question on institutional skepticism was added as another dimension of manosphere belief as an attention check. Misogynistic beliefs were measured using a set of scenarios that asked participants to select a response based on how they think the characters in the scenario should behave. To reduce the likelihood of participants pattern responding, the options for each scenario were randomized so that the most “Manosphere” response was not always the last choice. Because of this, questions were re-coded in the analysis so that a score of 1 = least Manosphere adherent beliefs to 4 = most Manosphere adherent beliefs. Similar to Manosphere Consumption, a composite score was created for Manosphere Beliefs where 1 = low, 2 = med, and 3 = high.

Analysis Plan

Using the data collected in this study, two primary correlations were conducted: (1) the relationship between identity processes and Manosphere Awareness and (2) the relationship between Manosphere Awareness and Manosphere Beliefs. The correlation between identity processes and Manosphere Awareness was examined three times, corresponding to the three status dimensions: commitment, depth, and breadth. For all analyses, Spearman correlation was used.

Chapter 4: Results

Analyses focused on three relationships between identity processes, Manosphere belief, and Manosphere consumption. Table 1 shows that participants had nearly equal mean levels of commitment (4.715) and exploration in depth (4.717). Commitment measured the extent to which participants feel secure in their life direction and exploration in depth measured the degree to which participants have thought deeply about their life direction. Exploration in breadth was lower with a mean of 3.743 [Table 1]. Exploration in breadth measured the extent to which participants thought of different life paths and how much they engaged with others on their life choices before committing. The range for responses for commitment was between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). While for exploration in depth and exploration in breadth, it was 1.33 (between Strongly Disagree and Disagree) and 7. The majority of participants responded within 5-6 (somewhat agree to agree) to the commitment questions. Additionally, participants were clustered around the “neutral” point of the survey indicating that participants generally had lower levels of exploration in breadth and depth as compared to commitment [see appendix for figures].

Manosphere belief was fairly evenly distributed across the low, medium, and high ranges for the overall sample [Table 2]. However, when isolating by participant source, I found that 93% (n=55) of Online participants scored high for Manosphere belief and Tufts participants were nearly split between low (54.9%, n= 39) and medium (45.1%, n=32) Manosphere belief. Figure 3 showed that overall Manosphere consumption skews to the lower end of the scale, with the majority of participants saying they never consumed any Manosphere content. When looking at the categorical Manosphere consumption, 37.4% (n=49) of participants say they have never consumed content from selected Manosphere figures. 44.3% (n=58) of participants had low

levels of Manosphere consumption (Once in a while), 13% (n=17) had medium levels of Manosphere Consumption (Monthly or Weekly) and 4.6% (n=6) had high levels of Manosphere consumption (Daily). This distribution held the same when splitting the data by Tufts and Online participants, with the majority of responses falling into “never” or “low”.

I checked the normality of my all measures by analyzing their histograms and P-P plots. Based on this analysis, Manosphere consumption (self) was not normally distributed. The histogram of Manosphere consumption (self) showed a left skew towards lower scores for consumption: this result was not unexpected as there could be an impact from social desirability bias as some participants would be disinclined from admitting to consuming content from these types of creators. Additionally, participants may have lowered the overall frequency of consumption of Manosphere creators as well which could skew the average consumption lower. Further, skewness (1.908) is more than twice the standard error (0.212) which indicates an asymmetrical distribution. Additionally, the value of skewness is larger than 1, it is positively skewed but indicates a highly skewed distribution. Because kurtosis is much larger than 2 (3.734) indicating that the data is likely not normally distributed and is very peaked.

The standard deviation for Manosphere consumption (self) is quite large (4.229) which indicates a large spread of data and the potential for extreme outliers. There were 49 participants who indicated that they “never” consumed any media from the listed creators, including those who were not considered part of the Manosphere. It should be noted that these 49 participants indicated a variety of consumption responses for the Social Circle consumption section which may have contributed to desirability bias and further indicates that these participants have some awareness of the Manosphere, even if not through their own media consumption. The P-P plot

for Manosphere Consumption showed deviation from the imposed line, indicating a non-normal distribution [Figure 4 – see Appendix].

The histogram for the composite Manosphere Belief scores visually appears abnormally distributed with two peaks at either end of the bell curve. There is a bimodal distribution in the data. The P-P plot shows a mostly normal distribution. Z-scores were conducted across all variables to find outliers, only one outlier was found and removed.

Spearman Correlation Analyses

Manosphere Consumption by Identity Process

To examine the relationship between identity processes and Manosphere consumption, I used Spearman's correlations due to the non-normal distribution of the data and the presence of empty categories in group-based analyses. For the Online cohort, Spearman's correlations revealed no statistically significant relationships between Manosphere consumption and Commitment, Exploration in Depth, or Exploration in Breadth. The correlation coefficients were all weak ($\rho = 0.041, -0.062, \text{ and } -0.053$ respectively), indicating that identity processes are not meaningfully associated with levels of Manosphere content consumption. When isolating for Tufts participants, the correlation values remained low and non-significant ($\rho = -0.062, -0.059, \text{ and } -0.025$). These indicate very weak and no statistically significant relationships. Here too, Manosphere consumption does not appear to be correlated with identity processes. These results indicate no statistically significant correlation between identity processes and Manosphere content consumption while avoiding the assumption violations with an ANOVA analysis.

I did not find any connection between identity processes and Manosphere Consumption in the overall group or when isolating for participant type. In other words, the identity processes did not appear to predict levels of Manosphere Consumption for this sample. However, when

looking at data by participant types, some of the consumption groups had less than five in each category making the sample size small and potentially not reliable.

Social Circle Manosphere Consumption by Identity Process

Spearman correlations were also used to analyze the relationship between identity processes and reported Manosphere consumption by participants' social circles. For the Online cohort, social circle Manosphere consumption all Spearman rho values were non-significant at 0.198, 0.042, and -0.013 for Exploration in Depth, Exploration in Breadth, and Commitment respectively. Although we see a slight positive trend between Exploration in Depth and Exploration in Breadth and Manosphere consumption by social circle, the relationships were not statistically significant. The Tufts cohort had one statistically significant relationship for Exploration in Depth with a p-value of 0.048 ($r = 0.236$). However, the relationships for Commitment and Exploration in Breadth were both non-significant.

Similarly, I found that there was no relationship between Social Circle Manosphere Consumption and identity processes for the overall cohort nor isolating for recruitment groups. This means that the content consumption by friends and family is not related to the identity processes of participants. This analysis was mainly done to evaluate if participants would answer more honestly about Manosphere consumption if they were able to frame it as someone else's consumption. While the level of consumption was marginally higher for this question, it was not statistically significant in its relationship to identity processes.

Identity Process by Level of Manosphere Belief

To assess the relationship between identity processes and Manosphere Belief, Spearman's correlations were used instead of ANOVA to account for continuous variables and

small subgroup sizes. For the Online cohort, Spearman's rho was -0.264 with a p-value <0.05 (0.043). This indicates that there is a significant negative correlation between identity commitment and Manosphere beliefs ($r = -0.264$, $p = 0.043$). As commitment increases, Manosphere beliefs decrease in the Online group. Since $p < 0.05$, the correlation is statistically significant. Similarly, there is a significant negative correlation between identity commitment and Manosphere beliefs in the Tufts group ($r = -0.263$, $p = 0.027$). As commitment increases, Manosphere beliefs decrease. This relationship is also statistically significant.

I found several significant relationships in this analysis. Looking at the total sample, there was a significant relationship between Manosphere Belief and Identity Commitment. When the data was isolated by the recruitment group, Tufts students also had a significant relationship between Identity Commitment and Manosphere Belief. However, Online participants had a significant relationship between Identity Exploration in Depth and Manosphere Belief.

Manosphere Consumption by Manosphere Belief

Given the ordinal, non-normal nature of Manosphere consumption and belief variables, Spearman correlation was run to assess the relationship between these variables. For the Online cohort, there was a negative correlation between Manosphere consumption and Manosphere belief with $\rho = -0.278$ and a p-value of <0.05 ($p = 0.033$). For the Tufts cohort, there was a positive, but marginally non-significant relationship with $\rho = 0.227$ and $p = 0.057$.

However, further review of the belief and consumption scores showed that Tufts participants mostly fell into the low and medium Manosphere consumption categories, while Online participants were skewed heavily toward high levels of consumption. The Online group showed both higher overall belief and more extreme consumption behaviors. In contrast, the Tufts group displayed a more balanced and varied distribution of belief and consumption levels,

which may explain the weaker, non-significant positive trend. The bar chart trends continue to support a clear distinction in both consumption and belief patterns between the two participant groups.

The main findings from this study were that while overall there was no relationship between identity processes and content consumption, there was a relationship between Manosphere consumption and belief and identity processes and Manosphere belief. Most notably, identity commitment was significantly and negatively correlated with Manosphere within the Tufts cohort, suggesting that higher levels of commitment to one's identity are associated with lower endorsement of Manosphere ideology. Additionally, Manosphere consumption and belief were significantly negatively correlated among Online participants, while Tufts participants showed a non-significant positive trend. These cohort differences point to the importance of context in understanding the intersection of identity development and ideological engagement.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary of Key Findings

The present study was designed to investigate the extent to which identity processes of college-aged males might be associated with Manosphere content consumption and how consumption was associated with Manosphere beliefs. The connection between identity processes and Manosphere consumption and belief has not been previously empirically studied. Additionally, the existing social media research has not looked at the impact of specific content creators in a quantitative way. In an attempt to evaluate the connections between identity, content, and beliefs, I adapted Luyckx's expanded identity model and created a truncated set of

questions that were asked alongside questions on consumption (self), social circle consumption, and misogynistic beliefs.

The goal of this study was to understand how the commitment identity processes might influence the amount of Manosphere content college-aged males consume. Additionally, this study explored the extent to which the consumption of misogynistic content might influence the belief in misogynistic ideas among college-aged males. I hypothesized that participants who had low commitment and high levels of exploration would be more likely to consume Manosphere content. I also hypothesized that those who consumed more Manosphere content would have higher overall belief in misogynistic Manosphere ideologies.

The main takeaways from this study are that identity processes do not predict Manosphere consumption and that, for Tufts students, Commitment was negatively correlated with Manosphere Belief. In other words, the higher Tufts student's identity commitment was, the less they aligned with misogynistic Manosphere beliefs.

Most importantly, I found that online participants showed a statistically significant relationship between Manosphere Consumption and Belief while Tufts students did not. Within this analysis, I also found that 93% of online participant responses fell into the "high" category for Manosphere belief regardless of their consumption habits. Additionally, I found in an isolation of Online participants that they displayed a statistically significant relationship between Exploration in Depth scores and Manosphere belief but there was no significance between Commitment and Manosphere belief.

Further investigation of the Exploration in Depth scores for Online participants found that the average participant score was between the neutral response and "somewhat agree" for these questions. Notably, there was a cluster of responses at the "somewhat agree", "agree", and

“somewhat disagree”. This could mean that while there was a significant relationship between Exploration in Depth and Manosphere belief for the online cohort, their actual levels of Exploration were clustered around the neutral response. I must also consider that perhaps the measure I designed was not calibrated to detect the variance of Manosphere Beliefs with enough granularity to capture true differences in belief. Online participants may have some degree of variation in their Exploration in Depth but most responses did not strongly lean toward the extreme ends. This suggests that, although there is a relationship, most individuals had moderate levels of exploration rather than very high or very low. Neutral responses could reflect participants were genuinely uncertain or that the measurement was not clear, leading to imprecise responses.

Additional analysis with Spearman’s rho showed that there was a negative significant relationship between Commitment levels and Manosphere Belief for both the Online and Tufts cohort. However, the effect sizes for both were smaller. This could suggest that while higher Commitment scores are generally associated with lower Manosphere Beliefs, other factors such as scale sensitivity or the cognitive flexibility of participants may have played a more significant role. For example, participants with high Commitment may view Manosphere Beliefs as logical rather than ideological.

Interpretation of Findings

The results of this study, while not entirely conclusive, confirm that the relationship between identity processes, content consumption, and personal beliefs is complex. The results partially support my hypothesis that content consumption is correlated to Manosphere Beliefs. However, these relationships were only found when isolating for Online participants which highlights the contextual nuances that are related to where I recruited participants from.

I believe that the results of this study show that content consumption can reinforce misogynistic, anti-social beliefs. However, the results of this study are an artifact of both the participant sample recruited from a specific moment in Discord servers and the scenario-based questions used to capture Manosphere beliefs.

My survey asked about content consumption as it related to specific creators but did not expand deeper into other types of content consumption or engagement with like-minded followers across forums. For those who are online, the exploration in depth that comes with voluntarily joining and engaging in alt-right discord forums may mean that Manosphere beliefs are further reinforced in ways that those who only receive Manosphere talking points from creators do not experience.

The high Manosphere Belief rate among the majority of online participants also suggests that even minimal exposure to Manosphere content could be influential in establishing antisocial ideals. As discussed previously in this thesis, the research shows that creating an in-group (males) and out-group (females) dynamic can increase the likelihood of adherence to the beliefs of the in-group. Additionally, research shows that the “victimhood narrative” described in the Manosphere resonates strongly among males who feel rejected by women, society, or both (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010). This “cultural marginalization” is reinforced by time spent in online forums. One interpretation of these results is that the online cohort of participants was surrounded by the Manosphere ideals in conversations with other online members and may not even need to interact with Manosphere content creators to engage with Manosphere ideologies.

Another possible reason why the Tufts and Online cohorts differ so much could be in part due to the environment of a university. Tufts University is a private institution in a strongly leftwing state with a competitive application process. It stands to reason that students who go to

Tufts have several protective factors such as higher critical thinking and access to peer diversity. Additionally, there is a fair bit of social pressure to say or not say certain things that may have driven socially acceptable responses from Tufts participants.

In response to the first research question focused on identity processes and Manosphere consumption, this study found no statistically significant relationship between the three identity processes and content consumption overall and when isolating for Tufts and Online cohorts. This means that contrary to the Hypothesis 1, college-aged males with low commitment identity processes did not necessarily consume a different level of Manosphere content as compared to those with higher levels of commitment. The data from this sample did not support the hypothesis that an individual's commitment levels lead to higher consumption in Manosphere content.

The second research question explored the relationship between Manosphere consumption and Misogynistic Beliefs. This study found no significant association between Manosphere Consumption and Misogynistic Beliefs overall or for the Tufts cohort. However, there was a statistically significant relationship for the Online cohort which indicates that higher content consumption was associated with stronger Misogynistic beliefs. This means that Hypothesis 2 is partially supported. I believe this can be somewhat explained by the fact that online participants were sourced from Manosphere servers. These online participants are more likely to engage with Manosphere messaging by opting into highly misogynistic spaces. There is a possibility that they are getting Manosphere messaging reinforced more frequently than those who only consume media directly from selected Manosphere creators. Additionally, the engagement that happens in Discord servers can reinforce the messaging feedback loop through multiple means such as emoji engagement from others or even having the risk of losing group membership if they say something a Discord community moderator disapproves of.

A somewhat unexpected result of this study is how skewed the variation in Manosphere Belief was for the Tufts and Online cohorts. While higher rates of Manosphere Beliefs were expected from the Online cohort some general variation was still expected across the high, medium, and low composite scores. While social desirability bias could play a role, the lack of any high scores for Tufts students or any medium scores for Online participants was unexpected. An explanation for this could come from the amplification of Manosphere talking points in the online forums where participants were recruited. Figure 3 showed that despite low levels of self-reported Manosphere consumption, Online participants indicated high levels of Manosphere Beliefs.

While exposure to Manosphere talking points from prominent influencers certainly has an impact, there is an added 'stickiness' to these messages when they are reinforced through personalized interactions in spaces like Discord servers. Unlike the one-way consumption of content from a central figurehead, engagement in peer-to-peer discussions fosters a sense of social validation, deepens ideological buy-in, and encourages further participation. The interactive nature of these spaces allows for real-time reinforcement, emotional investment, and the tailoring of messages to resonate more effectively with individual users. As a result, individuals who encounter these talking points through direct, personal exchanges may be more likely to internalize and adopt them compared to those who only passively consume influencer content.

Theoretical Implications

The major theoretical implication of this study's findings is that the lack of correlation between identity processes and Manosphere consumption challenges the prevailing application of identity-based models in this space. There is an assumption that individuals seek out content

that aligns with or compensates for insecurities in their self-concept. However, the results of this study suggest that there are other factors at play in connecting young men to the Manosphere. This also indicates that we need to refine research questions around the Manosphere to account for non-psychological pathways of exposure. This could mean that other factors such as social environment, peer influences, or even algorithmic amplification are stronger indicators that someone could come into contact with these content creators.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development underscores the importance of social context in identity formation, particularly during the later stages of adolescence and young adulthood. In this study, the contrasting environments of Tufts students and Online participants illustrate how the different social contexts may have contributed to the exposure and engagement with Manosphere content. This is particularly evident when looking at the scores of Manosphere belief by consumption for the Online cohort that showed that consumption of specific creators was not the driving factor behind misogynistic beliefs. Tufts students opt into secondary education in a highly selective and progressive academic environment. It stands to reason that even students who consume Manosphere content or who hold Manosphere beliefs may "know better" than to answer honestly in a survey on campus. Conversely, online participants who opt into Manosphere spaces and who completed a survey may have much more strongly held Manosphere beliefs than a more passive member of these communities and those who did not engage with the survey.

Agenda-setting theory provides a framework for understanding how certain topics and narratives become salient within these social contexts. This theory of media states that while media does not tell people what to think, it sets the topics for what people think about. In the traditional media environment, media outlets like the news and newspapers would gatekeep the

topics shared with the public. However, social media represents a shift to the democratization of agenda-setting. A 2016 study found that social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter changed how news and ideas are shared. Users' networks became "micro agenda setters," with following feeds being populated by user-generated content (Donghee & Wohn, 2016). The network-driven agenda setting not only influences what people think about but also shapes their attitudes towards the news, as people are more likely to seek out and consume content that is shared by their network. This is supported by a 2022 study that found professional media has less influence on social media than individual agendas through the formation of the "opinion leader" persona (Yi & Wang, 2022). This is further connected to the Manosphere through figures like Andrew Huberman, who is seen as a key opinion leader in the health and wellness space and shapes the media agenda of his followers by selecting podcast guests (e.g., Jordan Peterson) and promoting pseudoscientific commentary on scientific research.

It is through these "micro agenda setters" that we find the connection between identity development and the Manosphere. Erikson's theory of identity development emphasizes the importance of social context in shaping the issues and narratives of young people. On social media, young people are introduced to the topics most important to those of the people in their social networks. I saw this firsthand in Discord servers and other online spaces, the topics prioritized by peers become focal points for discussion and identity negotiation. The exposure to group issues and values on social media aligns with Erikson's view that identity formation is shaped by the social environment. Here the digital environment of young adults is that social context. The results of this study suggest that identity processes alone do not account for Manosphere content consumption, highlighting the potentially greater influence of peer-driven engagement. This has implications for how we might go forward to study digital radicalization,

suggesting that content consumption alone is not enough to drive beliefs but that interactive peer-to-peer engagement may be the key to ideological reinforcement.

Potential Contributions

My goal in writing this thesis was to explore the foundational question of how social media influences young people. I hope that this study contributes to a growing body of research demonstrating that social media is a powerful force in identity formation through the exposure of young people to ideologies and communities that can shape their beliefs and behaviors. The findings underscore that social media's influence extends beyond direct creator connections to include peer interactions, feedback loops, and ideological reinforcement that promote anti-social beliefs during key developmental periods.

Despite the partial inconclusiveness of this study, the finding that Online cohorts hold stronger misogynistic beliefs tells us something about the strength of online interactions in spreading Manosphere ideologies. This also may point to the interaction's validation loops in servers/forums and echo chambers that online users self-select into. This was especially notable for online participants who reported low consumption of Manosphere content but still held strong Manosphere beliefs. This is particularly important to investigate as right-wing media is dominating the digital content ecosystem in the United States. A Media Matters study that came out as I was writing the discussion of this thesis provided data that shows that media containing right-wing beliefs is heavily dominating the current digital media ecosystem (Gogarty, 2025). Right-leaning shows had nearly 5 times the followers than left-leaning shows and received more views (about 2/3rds of all views). This is true across platforms regardless of format with 1/3rd of the right-leaning shows identified as non-political despite having a right-lean to their content. Many of these undercover shows fall under comedy and culture. Further proving my earlier point

that the meme-ification and casual discussion of Manosphere beliefs contribute to the spread of these ideologies (Gogarty, 2025).

Additionally, the “male loneliness epidemic” has become a major talking point on social media. While creators focus on the increasing loneliness and isolation of men, they often fail to acknowledge that socialization has moved to online spaces. Here young men are indoctrinated with Manosphere ideals and are further radicalized against a progressive society. It is easy to blame young men for their loneliness but we must also consider their easy and frequent access, alongside message reinforcement through anonymous peers online, is far outpacing a person’s ability to think critically about these messages.

The data presented in this thesis highlights that online engagement in reinforcing spaces plays a role in shaping the misogynistic beliefs of young men. This underscores the urgent need for separation and limitation of engagement with these online communities and equipping young men with the media literacy skills to understand why these creators are incentivized to keep them angry and isolated. Media literacy programs should specifically address the tactics and narratives of the Manosphere. This includes teaching young men to recognize the common rhetorical framing strategies (such as appeals to anxieties around dating and relationships), the use of memes and humor to soften misogynistic beliefs, and the way that Manosphere creators leverage anger to drive engagement. Additionally, programs should utilize case studies and artifact-based examples to highlight how online echo chambers reinforce these extreme beliefs. Considering the findings of this study and the growing influence of Manosphere content, there is a clear need for comprehensive, forward-thinking approaches to digital literacy for young people. Interventions must go beyond reacting to current trends and proactively equip the next generation with the critical tools to resist harmful online rhetoric. Strengthening digital literacy

efforts can play a key role in disrupting the cycle of radicalization perpetuated through these online spaces.

Limitations

This study was limited by the sample size and survey format of data collection. Participants were asked to reflect on their content consumption habits and anti-social behaviors, and this present opportunity for response bias. Participants may not be completely truthful due to perceived social desirability especially since the survey is not anonymous, even though data reporting will be.

Additionally, the nature of social media research means that the platforms and influencers identified in the survey fluctuate in popularity and reach by the time study results are published. The scope of my research is limited to representing a specific slice of time in social media use with the hope that overall trends continue to apply in an evolving ecosystem. While the connection between the Manosphere and alt-right politics is significant, this thesis does not focus on it due to the timing of the study. The research was initiated in the late summer of 2024, before the US election, when the political landscape was highly uncertain. At that time, it was unclear who would win the election or whether far-right figures might assume roles in the new administration. This lack of clarity made it difficult to predict or analyze the direction of alt-right politics with confidence. Instead, the study prioritizes more tangible and consistent signals that were available both before and after the election that are not contingent on specific political outcomes.

Finally, a key piece of the Manosphere that was missing from this study was non-American and Non-white perspectives. There is a subset of the Manosphere that has been coined the Black Manosphere in which similar anti-woman narratives are being perpetuated but with the

added complexity of racism and increased subjugation of Black women in America. While I was able to include some prominent Black Manosphere creators, I acknowledge that my knowledge of this space is somewhat limited. Similar to mainstream media, the Manosphere tends to prioritize white voices so additional investigation is necessary to pull data on non-white Manosphere voices. This is especially true when looking at the limited geographical scope of this study. Additionally, misogyny is not something that is isolated to the United States. We have seen massive movements against systemic and growing misogyny in other countries with Korea's 4B movement becoming internationally known. While the results of this research may be applied to Western English-speaking contexts, it is limited in the scope of how misogyny may present itself in other cultural and language contexts.

Recommendations for Future Research

In the future, I hope to expand this study to include fringe political ideologies and conspiracy theories as content vectors that impact adolescent identity. I find these topics to be particularly urgent, especially in a world where misinformation and distrust in institutions and each other is rapidly disseminating and causing social divides that impact us all. Due to the overlap between the Manosphere and other fringe political groups, future studies should consider expanding the Manosphere beliefs captured. While misogyny is the foundation of the Manosphere, it has expanded in recent years to focus on political issues like DEI, immigration, and economic growth. It would be impactful to understand which of these issues resonate the most with young male audiences and the relationship to identity processes. The impact of connecting economic promises from far-right political figures to identity development will be crucial in developing intervention plans to slow and hopefully reverse the radicalization of young adults at a pivotal time in their developmental growth.

A follow-up study would benefit from the inclusion of media files in the survey. Often Manosphere content is spread not by individual content creators, but by faceless online users who generate, share, and evolve memes. Andrew Tate's rise to fame outlined the impact of grassroots message sharing and a future study could add clips or memes and evaluate the sentiment and reactions from participants. This may help to find other points of belief reinforcement around Manosphere content and point to which modes of communication are most effective in reaching young male audiences.

Another key direction for future research is to investigate young women and the impact of Traditional Wife, or Trad Wives, content. Trad Wife is a female-centric arm of the Manosphere. Trad Wife content centers around the idealization of traditional female gender roles" and often parrots Manosphere talking points of centering men, devaluing feminism, and crosses over with right-wing conspiracies (especially around healthcare). A study by Media Matters found that interacting with Trad Wife content on TikTok led to a content bubble of far-right conspiracy theories (Little, 2024). A unique aspect of Trad Wife content is that it is often more religiously integrated than the Manosphere is which means it may reach an already primed audience with an existing language for communicating around gendered ideals. Over the past few years, we have seen a rise in content aimed at young women to reintroduce traditional gender roles under new names like "divine feminine" and raising skepticalness of modern medicine through conversations around the unnaturalness of birth control that conveniently started around the time Roe v Wade was overturned. Young women are at risk for radicalization by fringe ideologies and it will be critical to understand how this pipeline occurs and what psychological processes are being exploited. By understanding the root cause, we will be able to support both men and women in navigating complex digital ecosystems.

Finally, a key future direction for Manosphere research would be to utilize AI tools to conduct sentiment analyses of conversations and talking points in Manosphere spaces. AI supported pattern detection can help provide a more robust understanding of key phrases or directions of conversations. The scale of content on social media makes it difficult to do sentiment analysis with a large sample size. However, with the support of ML and AI, models can be developed to assess larger data sets to find new associations in language and behavior.

Conclusion

A study released by Dublin City University found that it took less than 9 minutes for TikTok to create a content bubble of Manosphere content for a mock 16-year-old account (Baker, Ging, Maja, & Andreasen, 2024). From my own experience, it took me less than 30 minutes to go from net-new Discord user to finding several hate-filled servers. It is not just enough to study the reason behind why young men are attracted to Manosphere content but we also have to address the algorithmic amplification and easy access to this content.

It is easy to view the consequences of the Manosphere as isolated to just the young men who engage with this content and the people in their immediate social sphere but the 2024 election shows major societal shifts are being propped up by the rhetoric started in the Manosphere. As one New York Times writer puts it, “We underestimate the Manosphere at our peril” (Snyder, 2025). As a final call to action, I ask those who have read this study: pay close attention to what the young men in your life are consuming online, what they are liking, and what they are commenting on. When you hear them parroting Manosphere talking points, call it out early and often. Focus not on shaming them for believing these creators, but instead point out the holes in Manosphere logic. Make sure that the young men in your lives understand the context of the content they are watching and call out why these creators are incentivized to keep

and monetize their attention. Remember, if you wouldn't let Joe Rogan or Andrew Tate speak in your child's classroom, then don't let them watch their videos. I firmly believe that we as a society are capable of deradicalizing those who have been red-pilled and must work to ensure that the upbringing of the next generation of young men is not given to profiteering strangers on the internet.

Appendix

Tables

Table 1: Overall sample descriptives

Descriptives						
Measures	N	Mean	Median	Min	Max	St Dev
Identity Processes						
	130					
Commitment		4.7154	5	1	7	1.41975
Exploration in Depth		4.7179	4.6667	1.67	7	1.0755
Exploration in Breadth		3.7436	3.6667	1.33	7	1.19253
Manosphere Consumption						
	130					
Self		18.0846	16	15	36	4.22989
Social Circle		24.0308	23	15	37	4.78683

Table 2: Manosphere Belief

Composite Manosphere Beliefs			
Tufts Students		Frequency	Percent
	High	0	0
	Medium	32	45.1
	Low	39	54.9
Online Participants			
	High	55	93.2
	Medium	0	0
	Low	4	6.8

Table 3: Descriptives by Participant Demo

Descriptives by Participant Demo										
Measures	Tufts					Online				
	Identity Processes	Manosphere Consumption			Identity Processes	Manosphere Consumption				
	Commitment	Exploration in Depth	Exploration in Breadth	Self	Social Circle	Commitment	Exploration in Depth	Exploration in Breadth	Self	Social Circle
N	71					59				
Mean	4.6948	4.784	3.5352	18.2535	24.4366	4.7401	4.6384	3.9944	17.8814	23.5424
Median	5	4.6667	3.3333	17	24	5	5	3.6667	16	23
Min	2	2.67	1.33	15	15	1	1.67	1.33	15	15
Max	7	6.67	6	31	37	7	7	7	36	36
St Dev	1.28945	1.01902	0.99599	3.98826	4.81881	1.57333	1.14351	1.35964	4.52992	4.74277

Figures

Figure 1: Nick Fuente’s Twitter (X) Post



Figure 2: Manosphere Pipeline

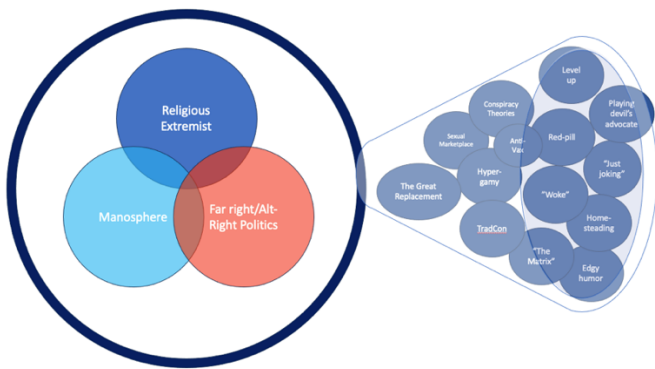


Figure 3: Manosphere Belief by Manosphere Consumption

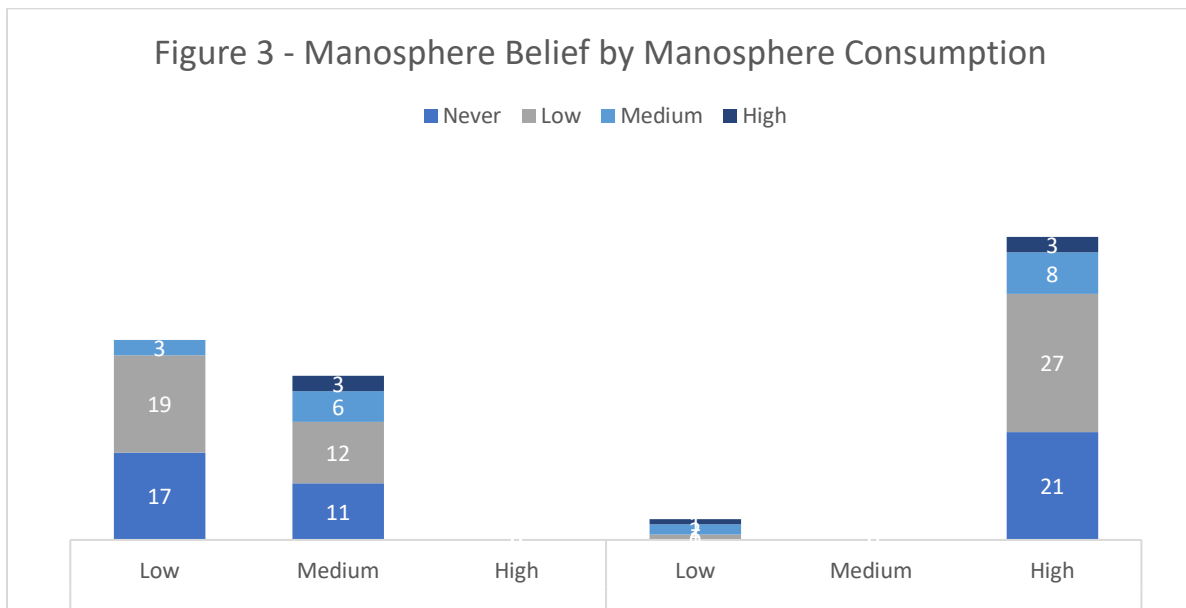


Figure 4: p-p Plot for Manosphere Consumption composite scores

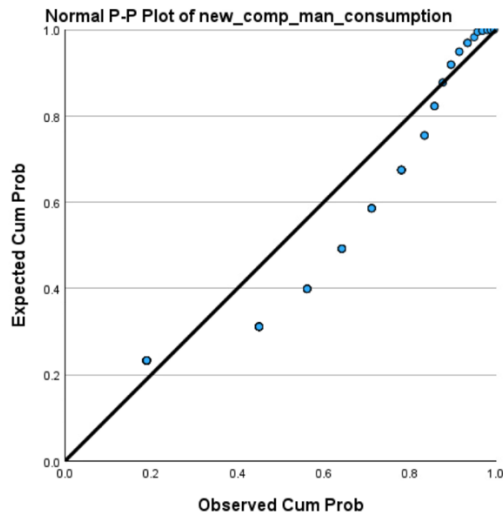
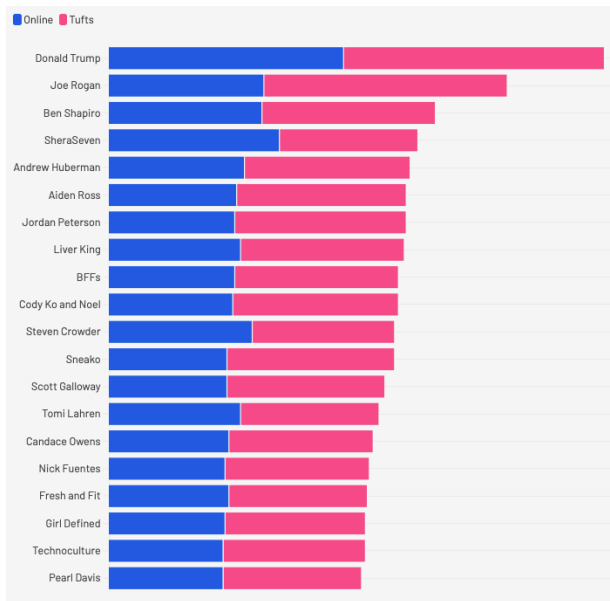


Figure 5: Manosphere Content Consumption by Demographic



Note: The bars above represent the total self-reported amount of consumption of each figure for all participants together

Figure 6: Commitment Scores

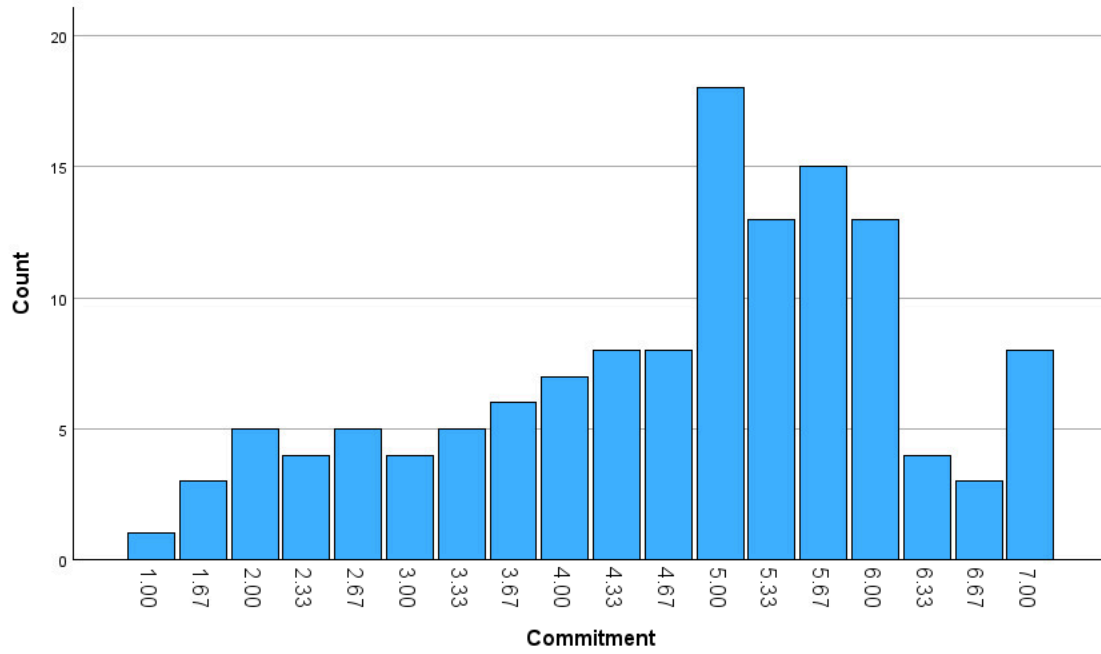


Figure 7: Exploration in Depth Scores

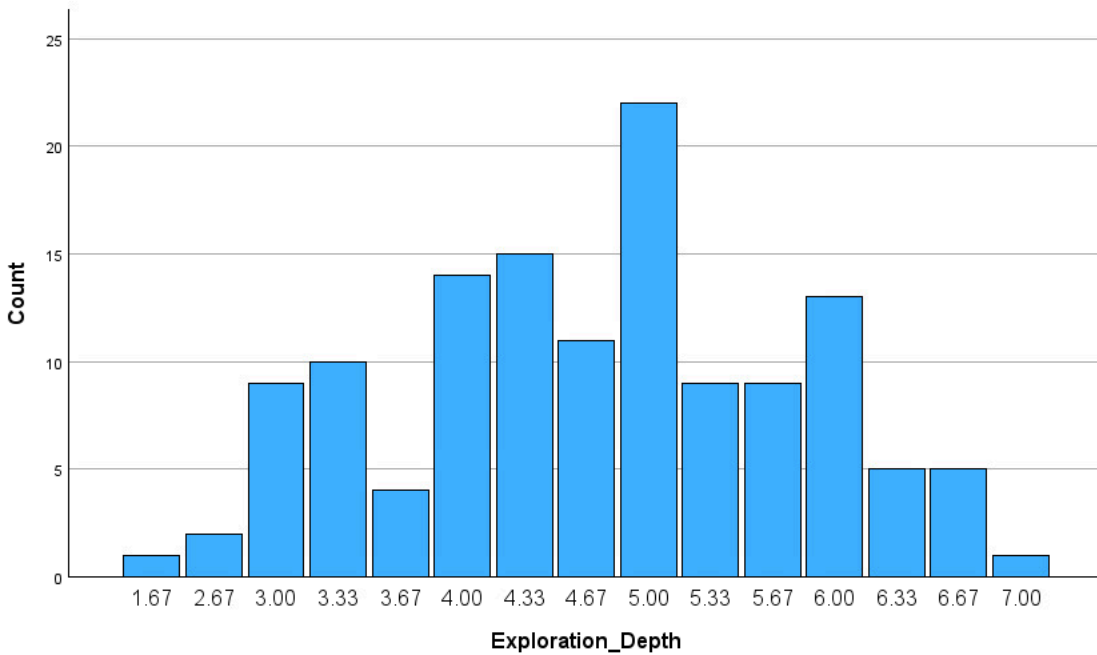
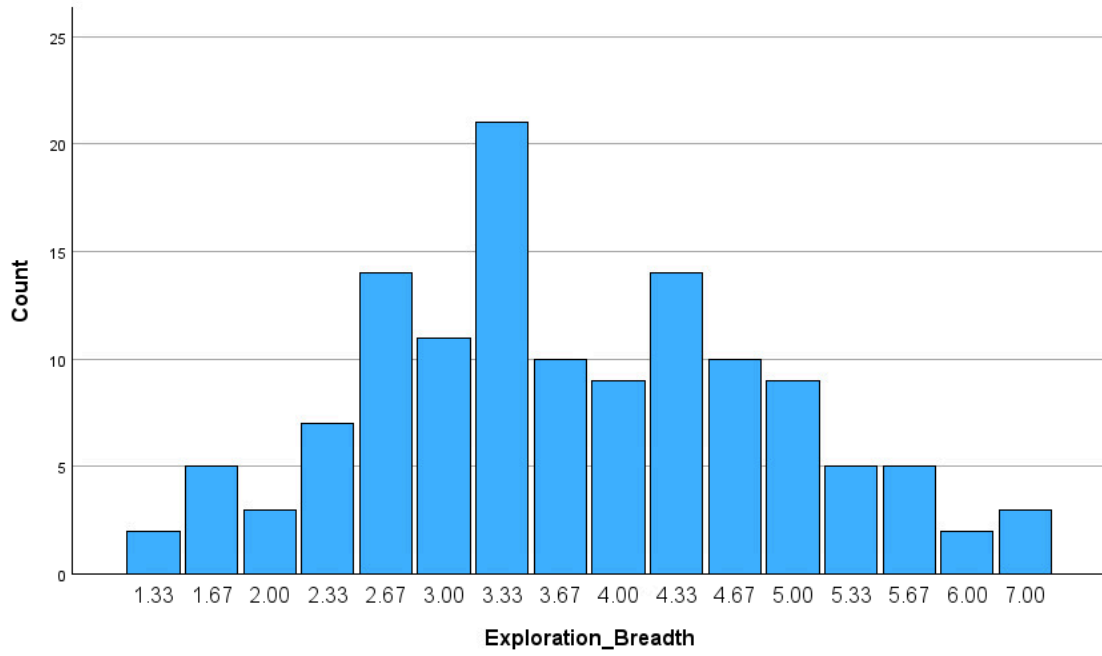
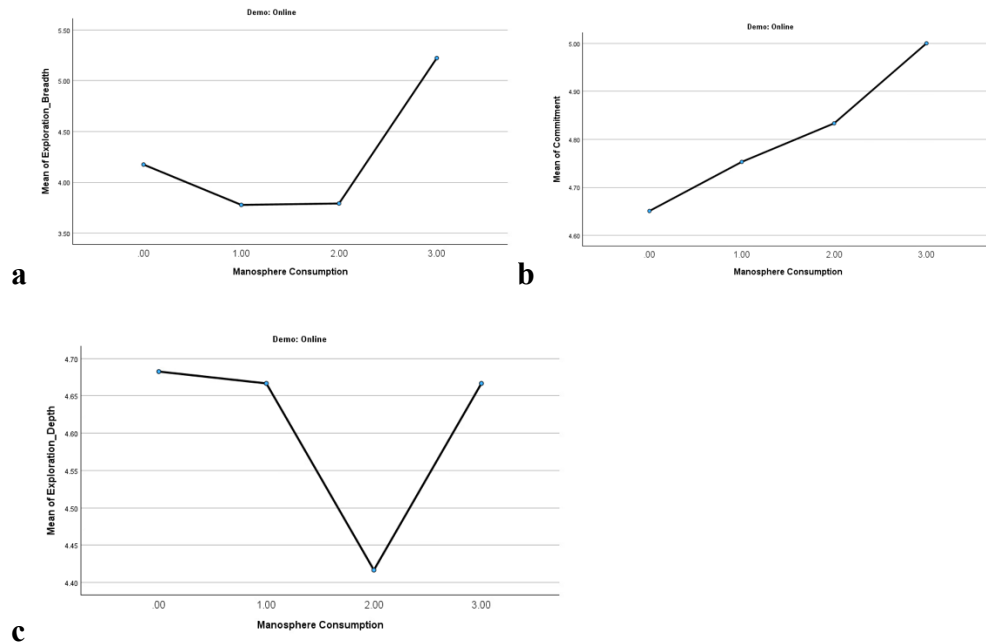


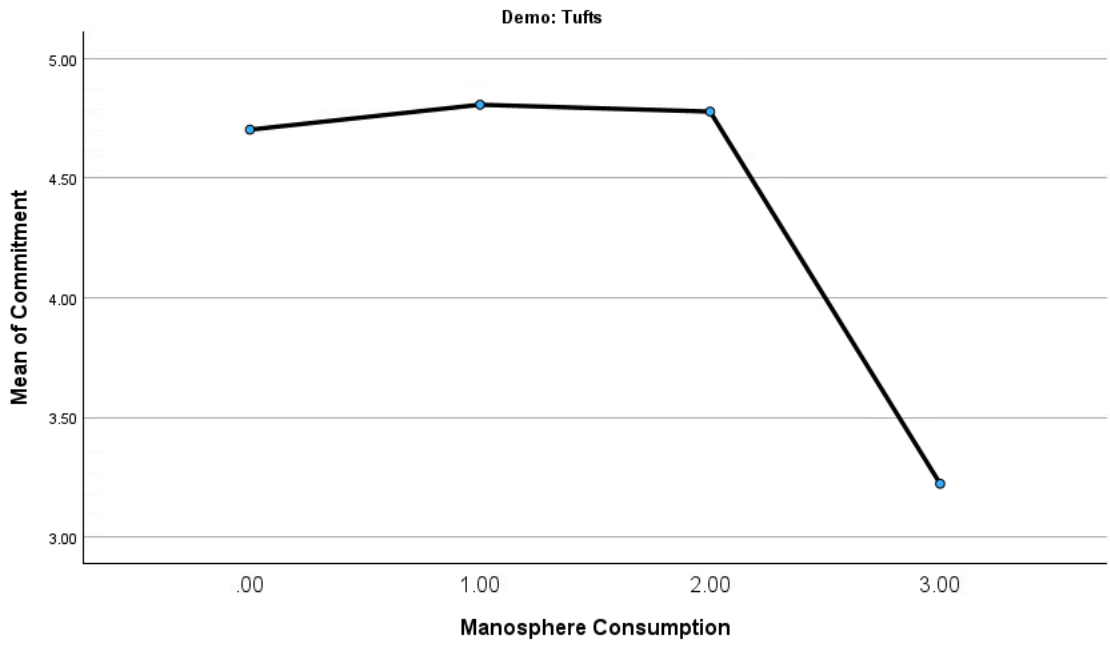
Figure 8: Exploration in Breadth



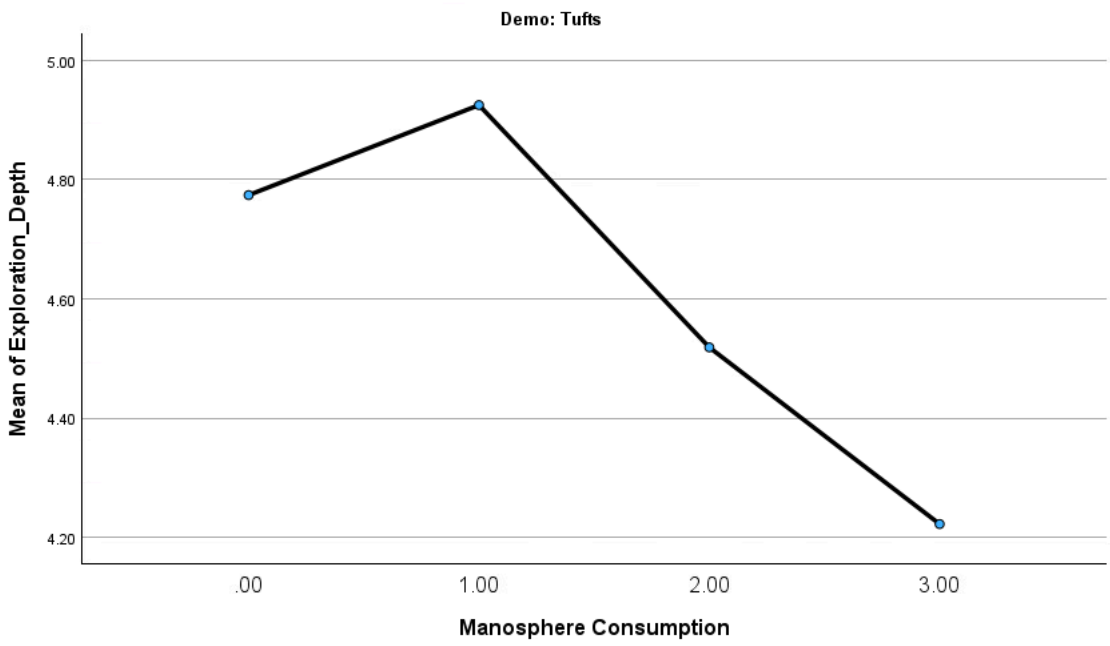
Figures 9a-c: Means Plots Manosphere Consumption by Identity Processes– Online



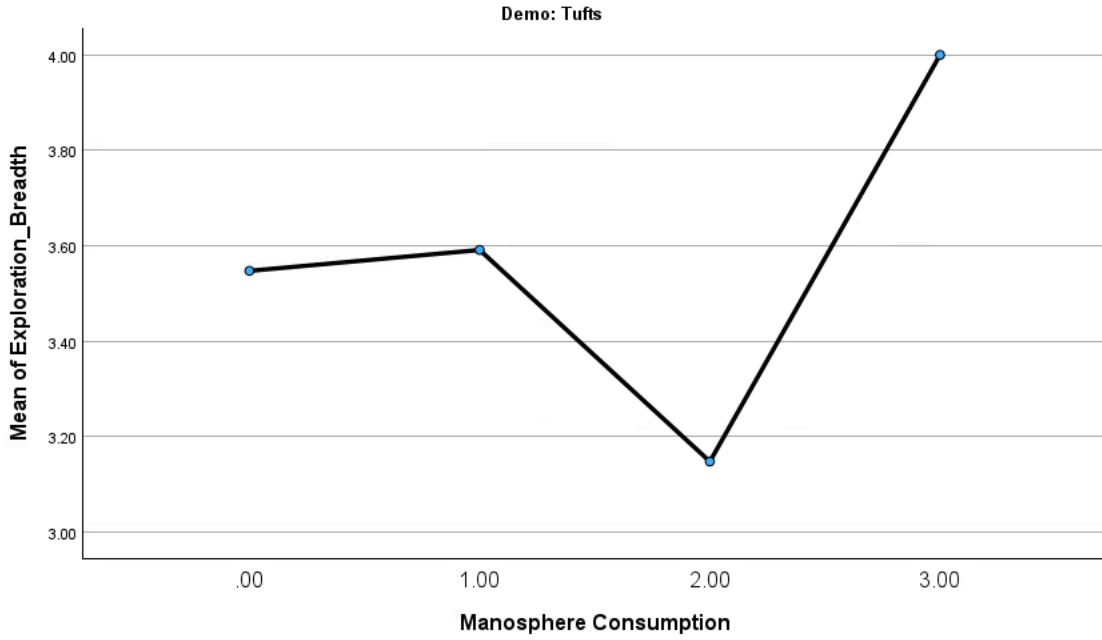
Figures 10a-c: Means Plots Manosphere Consumption by Identity Processes– Tufts



a



b



c

Survey

Dear Participant,

I am a Master's Candidate at Tufts University studying how the consumption of content from different social media personalities may impact identity development in late adolescents. This study explores how identity commitment and content consumption impacts internal beliefs about yourself and others. The study will be conducted via online survey. The survey should take 20 minutes.

The Qualtrics survey will ask questions about these topics

- (1) Demographic information
- (2) Social media use
- (3) Identity commitment
- (4) Familiarity with news and opinion content creators
- (5) Opinions of scenario-based interactions

PROCEDURES

Once you consent, you may proceed to the survey. You may complete the survey at your own pace, but note that if the survey is abandoned after 24 hours it will reset and you will have to begin again. This survey is completely anonymous so the researcher will not know which survey you completed.

RISK/ DISCOMFORT

It is your decision, and there are no consequences to saying no. I do not anticipate any major risks to participation. If you have any discomfort in answering the survey questions you may abandon the survey at any time, there will not be consequences for not completing the survey. As part of this research design, you may not be told or may be misled about the purpose or procedures of this research. However, the purpose or procedures of the research will be disclosed to you following your participation.

BENEFIT

You will be contributing to a new area of media research that may help to inform policy and product safety work in the future.

PROTECTION OF DATA

The cumulative results of this survey will be used in publications or presentations. I will not share identifiable information beyond myself and people helping me with this study. I will do everything I can to protect your privacy. The people responsible for monitoring this research

may possibly access the data. This can include the Tufts University IRB. Survey responses will be stored in a password-protected Tufts Box folder.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me. You can reach me through email: Sara's Email: sara.analoui@tufts.edu You can also reach my faculty advisor, Dr. Julie Dobrow: julie.dobrow@tufts.edu

If you need to get in touch about this research at any point in the future, this is the contact information of the research oversight board, the Tufts SBER IRB: Tufts Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research IRB 75 Kneeland Street, Suite 623 Boston, MA 02111 (617) 627-8804 SBER@tufts.edu

Sincerely,
Sara Analoui, B.A.
Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read and considered the information presented. I confirm that I understand the purpose of the research and the study procedures. I understand that I may ask questions at any time and can withdraw my participation. I have read this consent form. My response below indicates my willingness to participate in this study.

- Yes
- No

Q1A How old are you?

- <18
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- >22

Q1B What year were you born

- After 2007
- 2006
- 2005
- 2004
- 2003
- Before 2002

Q2 Where do you currently live?

- United States
- Europe
- Asia
- Africa
- Latin America
- Middle East
- Canada

Q3 What is your gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

Q4 I went to...

- A public high school
- A private high school
- Home Schooled

Q5 Select which social media platforms you are active on (you use these platforms at least once per week). Check all that apply

- TikTok
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Reddit
- Twitch
- Tumblr
- X (Twitter)
- Truth Social
- Kiwi Farms
- 4Chan
- Rumble

Q6 How many hours per day do you use social media? This is across all platforms you indicated above.

- Less than 1 hour
- 1-3 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 7-9 hours
- 10-12 hours
- More than 12 hours

Q7 Select to which degree do you agree with the following statements:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have decided on the direction I want to follow in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know what I want to do with my future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My plans for the future offer me a sense of security	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think about the future plans I have made	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk regularly with people in my real life about my plans for the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk regularly with people online about my plans for the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look to those online to see if the goals i put forward in live are a good idea	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Try to find out regularly what other people think about the specific direction I want to take in my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about what I want to do with my future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 How often do you consume content from these figures?	Never	Once in a while	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Aiden Ross	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andrew Huberman	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BFFs Podcast (Dave Portnoy, Josh Richards, Briana Chickenfry)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ben Shapiro	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cody Ko & Noel Miller	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Donald Trump	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kamala Harris	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drew Afualo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fresh & Fit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Girl Defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Steven Crowder	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hasan Piker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joe Rogan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jordan Peterson	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Candace Owens	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Liver King	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nick Fuentes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pearl Davis (Just Pearly Things)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scott Galloway	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sneako	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technoculture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tomi Lahren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phillip DeFranco	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SheraSeven (Sprinkle Sprinkle)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9 Have you heard your friends and/or family mention these figures?	Never	Once in a while	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Aiden Ross	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andrew Huberman	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BFFs Podcast (Dave Portnoy, Josh Richards, Briana Chickenfry)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ben Shapiro	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cody Ko & Noel Miller	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Donald Trump	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kamala Harris	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drew Afualo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fresh & Fit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Girl Defined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Steven Crowder	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hasan Piker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joe Rogan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jordan Peterson	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Candace Owens	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Liver King	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nick Fuentes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pearl Davis (Just Pearly Things)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scott Galloway	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sneako	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technoculture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tomi Lahren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phillip DeFranco	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SheraSeven (Sprinkle Sprinkle)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10 Dylan and Samantha both work for the same financial institute called FinBank. Dylan has been working at FinBank for 15 years. Samantha has been working for 12 years, but joined FinBank 2 years ago. There is a spot open in the executive board and both Dylan and Samantha are interviewing for the position. Currently 8 out of the 9 positions on the executive board are filled by men.

The CEO has recently committed to improving gender equality at FinBank and has said he would like Samantha to be appointed to the 9th position. The CEO has also stated that Samantha's experience at other companies will help to bring diversity of thought to the board.

Both Dylan and Samantha have the same degree level and performed equally as well in the interviews. Do you think it is fair that Samantha gets the position over Dylan?

- Yes, it is fair because the CEO's commitment to gender equality and diversity is important for the company's growth.
- Yes, it is fair because Samantha's experience at other companies brings a valuable perspective that the board currently lacks.
- No, it is not fair because Dylan has more years of service at FinBank and should be prioritized for the position.
- No, it is not fair because promotions should be based solely on tenure and interview performance, regardless of gender or diversity considerations.

Q11 Lola is a 22-year-old model who recently launched her own OnlyFans account. Her content has quickly gained popularity, and she has seen a significant increase in subscribers. Among her followers is a man who has begun to message her incessantly, both on and off the platform, despite Lola repeatedly asking him to stop.

This man insists that because he has paid for Lola's content, he is entitled to her time and attention outside of OnlyFans. He argues that by choosing to create content and accept money from men, Lola has invited this kind of attention.

He believes that if she didn't want this level of interaction, she should never have started an OnlyFans account or accepted payment for her images.

What do you think of the man's belief?

- Yes, he is right. By creating and monetizing content, Lola should expect and accept this kind of attention.

- Yes, if Lola didn't want such attention, she shouldn't have put herself in a position where men pay for her content.
- No, paying for content does not give anyone the right to cross personal boundaries or harass someone.
- No, Lola has the right to control who contacts her, regardless of the content she creates or how it is monetized.

Q12 Alex and Rebecca have been on a date, and things have gone well. Alex has paid for dinner, drinks, and a movie. As the night winds down, Alex suggests they go back to his place to "relax and continue the conversation." His tone becomes a bit more suggestive, hinting that he expects the evening to lead to something more intimate.

Earlier in the evening, Alex mentioned how much he enjoys being generous and treating others. Now, as he becomes more assertive, he starts thinking that his generosity throughout the night might mean that Rebecca should be willing to take the next step.

What do you think is the right way for Alex to feel?

- Alex feels that since he paid for the evening, Rebecca should be open to continuing the night at his place.
- Alex thinks it's only fair that Rebecca reciprocates his generosity by spending more time with him.
- Alex realizes that paying for the date doesn't entitle him to anything more and respects whatever Rebecca decides.
- Alex feels frustrated because he believes his efforts and expenses should naturally lead to something more intimate.

Q13 Ethan is a 16-year-old who has recently become interested in fitness and building muscle. He spends hours watching fitness influencers on social media, and one influencer, in particular, has caught his attention. This influencer claims to have "hacked" the system to achieve rapid muscle growth, promoting a specific line of supplements that he insists are key to getting big, fast.

Ethan decides to follow the influencer's advice and buys the supplements, excited to see quick results. However, during a routine check-up, his doctor warns him that these supplements are not scientifically proven to be effective and could potentially be harmful, especially at his age. The doctor advises Ethan to focus on a balanced diet, proper exercise, and patience for healthy and sustainable muscle growth.

Despite the doctor's warnings, Ethan remains skeptical. He trusts the influencer's advice because the influencer seems to have the results Ethan desires, and he feels that mainstream science and medicine are outdated or slow to recognize new trends in fitness.

What do you think of Ethan's reaction?

- Ethan should trust the influencer because they have achieved the results he wants, and mainstream science often lags behind real-world experiences.
- Ethan is right to question his doctor because the influencer's advice seems more practical and effective for achieving quick muscle gains.
- Ethan should consider that while influencers can be motivational, his doctor's advice is based on proven science and prioritizes his long-term health.
- Ethan should balance both perspectives but remain cautious about unverified supplements and prioritize safe and sustainable methods for fitness.

Q14 Mark is a senior manager at a tech company. Recently, the company has been emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusion, encouraging teams to work more closely together. However, Mark has started to feel uneasy about interacting with his female colleagues. He's heard stories about men in the workplace being accused of inappropriate behavior, even when they claimed they did nothing wrong.

To avoid any potential issues, Mark begins to exclude women from important meetings, informal brainstorming sessions, and after-work networking events. He rationalizes that it's safer to keep his distance from female colleagues to protect himself from any false accusations that could harm his career. Mark believes that women might exaggerate or fabricate situations to play the victim and advance their careers, so he sees his actions as a necessary precaution.

What do you think of Mark's actions?

- Mark is right to exclude his female colleagues because it's better to be safe than sorry in today's workplace environment.
- Mark's approach makes sense because men have to protect themselves from false accusations that could ruin their careers.
- Mark's actions are unfair because they deny women equal opportunities and are based on unfounded fears.
- Mark should find ways to work inclusively while ensuring professional boundaries, rather than excluding women entirely

Thank you for completing the survey! Before you submit your results, please read the following study debrief thoroughly.

You have just completed a survey that asked you about your consumption of some social media personalities, your confidence in your personal futures, and your opinions of masculinity, misogyny, and opposition to feminism. While this study does consider how your identity development could contribute to the type content you consume online, this study's core focus is on how consumption of influencers in the Manosphere may impact your views on gender and equality.

If you would still like to participate in this anonymous survey, hit submit at the bottom of this page. If you no longer wish to participate, you may exit out of this webpage and your results will not be recorded.

CONTACT INFORMATION If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me. You can reach me through email: Sara's Email: sara.analoui@tufts.edu

You can also reach my faculty advisor, Dr. Julie Dobrow: julie.dobrow@tufts.edu

If you need to get in touch about this research at any point in the future, this is the contact information of the research oversight board, the Tufts SBER IRB: Tufts Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research IRB 75 Kneeland Street, Suite 623 Boston, MA 02111 (617) 627-8804 SBER@tufts.edu

Sincerely,

Sara Analoui, B.A.

Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development

Submit

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