

# Research explores impact of 'manfluencer' culture on Australian schools

April 3 2024

---



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Research from Monash University has unveiled concerning insights into the resurgence of male supremacy and the advancement of toxic

masculinity in Australian schools.

The research findings, [published](#) in *Gender and Education*, suggest a disturbing pattern of sustained sexual harassment, sexism and misogyny perpetrated by boys, signaling a worrying shift in gender dynamics within school environments.

The paper, authored by Dr. Stephanie Wescott and Professor Steven Roberts from the Faculty of Education at Monash University, explores the power of "manfluencers," specifically Andrew Tate, a notorious self-proclaimed misogynist, and its impact on the behavior of boys towards [women](#) teachers and their female peers.

The paper follows the Federal Government's announcement in October of a three-year trial project to combat toxic masculinity on social media.

The research draws on qualitative interviews with 30 women teachers across public and [private schools](#) in Australia, and delves into the implications of Tate's ubiquitous social media presence, including how young people's interactions with Tate's content shape their views and subsequently their interactions in the classroom.

Dr. Wescott explains how the deliberate use of Tate's themes and beliefs in classrooms by young boys was found to provoke significant changes in their behavior and attitudes toward women.

"Our research found that male supremacy in classrooms was rampant among Australian schools. Our participants detailed overt displays of authority and dominance by boys towards women teachers, reflecting a resurgence of traditional patriarchal norms.

"The findings also outline a troubling increase in sexual harassment and misogynistic behavior against women teachers and girls in schools, with

Andrew Tate's influence shaping and reinforcing regressive views on masculinity," Dr. Wescott said.

Teachers unanimously reported that shifts in the behavior of boys intersect with both a return to face-to-face schooling after a period of remote learning during COVID lockdowns and the rise of Tate's popularity.

Teachers also identified that some boys have adopted Tate's messaging around post #metoo skewed gender power dynamics that situate women as now unfairly advantaged.

"(Students) make joking references about Andrew Tate to try and get a reaction from the girls or some female staff. They know exactly the type of polarizing figure that he is, but they feel safe enough to put him into the classroom as a joke," says Jane, a [school teacher](#) from NSW.

The perverse intent in these jokes is also captured by Melanie, a former teacher in a Queensland school who recently resigned due to sustained sexual harassment from boys.

"They didn't really say any specifics, just how much they loved him. And they know in a way that he was bad, but it was a funny thing to like him."

Dr. Wescott explains that these interactions are profoundly affecting women teachers' experiences at work.

"Women teachers are engaging in combative interactions that challenge and undermine their gender and their stance on Andrew Tate.

Alarmingly, some teachers we spoke to are reporting that schools are no longer a safe place for women teachers," said Dr. Wescott.

Acting CEO of Respect Victoria Serina McDuff said the research is critical to understand the influences young men are drawn to, how these influences drive gendered violence, and how to prevent this violence playing out in classrooms.

"This research reflects a concerning shift in the attitudes that some young men are expressing in schools, and points to the importance of in-depth, ongoing education for students on respectful relationships and challenging harmful gender stereotypes—the stereotypes that stress violence and domination," said McDuff.

"It's also a reminder that teachers and school staff must be supported to navigate these conversations, to support women and girls to be safe and respected in classrooms, and to support boys to challenge and reject extremist views like Tate's."

Report co-author Professor Steven Roberts highlighted the urgent need for open conversations in schools to allow women to share their experiences and engage in a dialogue about the influence of "manfluencer" culture on boys' developing identities and relationships.

"The study suggests that current school-level responses, often one-off sessions or punitive talks, may not be sufficient to address the distress experienced by teachers," said Professor Roberts.

"Instead, our findings call for broader and more comprehensive school-level responses to tackle the pervasive influence of 'manfluencers' on boys' behavior, including open conversations, ongoing dialogue, and proportionate measures."

The paper also recommends the importance of school leadership in addressing the impact of "manfluencer" culture, emphasizing the need for more attention to the extent, form and effect of school leaders'

responses to this phenomenon.

The researchers urge school communities and fellow scholars to focus on the implications of responses to "manfluencer" culture in educational settings, and consider the broader impact on young men's relationships with women and girls, their identities and their understanding of power and social advantage.

**More information:** Stephanie Wescott et al, The problem of anti-feminist 'manfluencer' Andrew Tate in Australian schools: women teachers' experiences of resurgent male supremacy, *Gender and Education* (2023). [DOI: 10.1080/09540253.2023.2292622](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2023.2292622)

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Research explores impact of 'manfluencer' culture on Australian schools (2024, April 3) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-04-explores-impact-manfluencer-culture-australian.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.