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'Trying to talk white male teenagers off the alt-right ledge' and other impacts of masculinist influencers on teachers

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are deeply affected by the same cultural influences as their students; directly and indirectly. This is certainly true in the rise of masculinity influencer, extremist, and alleged sex trafficker Andrew Tate and the brands of individual and cultural misogyny he perpetuates. Using data collected from the /r/Teachers subreddit community of Reddit.com, we explored how users discussed the influences of a (re)surging misogyny on the jobs of teachers and in classrooms. Users express that students are actively parroting male supremacist rhetorics at school and that is serving to devalue women teachers and make classrooms less safe. Discussion is framed using Deleuzian and masculinities theories to provide deeper analysis and interpretation of the data. We suggest that there is cause for concern regarding the immediate impacts, as well as long-term consequences of masculinist and male supremacist ideologies on youth, teachers, and schools.

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Introduction

In July of 2022, a new name was thrust into our collective consciousness and the global cultural zeitgeist. In what appeared to many as an out-of-nowhere rise to prominence, Andrew Tate became a household name. At the time, Tate had been building his online influence for many years, and the fact that his talking points and rhetoric were reproductions of those from previous masculinities grifters was overshadowed by the sheer volume of his presence (Cousineau 2022; Frejsjö and Wernersson Birgersson 2023). He was (and remains) inescapable for young men on social media platforms, especially TikTok, through the algorithmically-generated feeds that dominate their media consumption and leisure time (Baker, Ging, and Andreasen 2024; Tong 2024). Tate's misogyny, male supremacism, and calls for violence against women made him a public figure – both reviled and revered. The outcry over his disturbing content resulted in a near-total mainstream social media ban for the influencer in August of 2022, but this did little to reduce his presence or influence (Robertson 2023). His persisting power in the face of deplatforming was couched in his leveraging of social media algorithms and content policies that, while

they prevented him from posting content, did nothing to prevent his likeness from appearing (Tiffany 2023); platforms banned him from posting, but did not ban his presence. Using a clever combination of easily editable content, a base of dedicated followers, and a media ecosystem designed to maintain or re-admit controversial content as it drives engagement and therefore revenue (highlighted by Tate's reinstatement on Musk's X (née Twitter)), Tate's images, video clips, and messages remain easily accessible and almost omnipresent in the feeds of teenage boys and young men.

It is in this landscape of Tate super-fame and ubiquity (Andrew Tate was the most searched name on Google in July of 2022) that the 2022–2023 school year began in North America. With teachers of all grade levels at the front lines of changing social and cultural phenomena, the changes in public and private discourse brought about by Tate's rise to fame were likely to have direct impacts on them. So, as the school year began, we asked ourselves how teachers would be affected by the changing discourses of gender, power, and influence brought about by the misogyny in the social media algorithms of young people. Our interest in this question was renewed by the news of Tate's arrest by Romanian authorities on charges of human trafficking and rape at the end of 2022.¹

This study explores how members of the /r/Teachers sub-community of the social media site Reddit.com were discussing the impacts of Andrew Tate on their students and their jobs through the second half of 2022 and early 2023, when Tate was at his most popular. It frames this exploration in a combination of the social theory of Deleuze and Guattari with masculinities theory, an approach introduced by Anna Hickey-Moody (2019). Using data collected between June 2022 and February 2023, we explore the direct and profound influences that the rhetorics of misogyny, power, and male supremacy that Tate (re)popularized on social media had on North American teachers.² We demonstrate that the infiltration of Tate's ideas into schools through repeated and technologically-facilitated messaging to young men causes teachers, especially those who identify as women, to negotiate deep (and sometimes systemic) experiences of misogyny. While some teachers have found effective and creative ways to confront these ideas and beliefs, the impacts on teachers (and students) of persistent misogynist ideologies on and offline are significant.

Background

Teachers as culturally significant and simultaneously devalued

Teaching (at all levels, but especially at the elementary and secondary levels) has always been bound up in sets of conflicting and problematic cultural tropes.³ The transition of teaching to 'women's work' during the mid-nineteenth century created a contestation in the separate sphere ideology (public vs. private) where women were simultaneously engaged in waged work (public sphere), while meant to 'move only in the private world of the heterosexual family' (private sphere) (Weiler 1989, 16). One of the ways this gender role disruption was navigated was the casting of the classroom as 'a continuation of the family' (17), which allowed it to be folded into the private sphere (De Bellaigue 2001; Preston 1993). As part of the private sphere, women's work as teachers could be cast as 'not really work' with this positioning justified by the supposed nurturing and caring qualities associated with the role (Weiler 1989). This devaluation continues in overt

ways where, for example, teaching is not given the designation of ‘profession’ in most North American jurisdictions, diminishing teaching relative to other professions with similar levels of education and certification (Maxwell, Gereluk, and Martin 2022).

Positioning teaching as non-professional, private-sphere work also allowed it to be folded into the patriarchal and classed structures so deeply tied to the industrial/colonial worldviews of the late nineteenth century (De Bellaigue 2001). Women teachers, then, could remain under the control and direction of male administrators as they would have fallen under the control of men in their homes. The contemporary normalization of women in the workforce outside of teaching and other forms of care work under late-stage capitalism has done little to change this dynamic, and women teachers remain impacted by the multi-faceted pressures of care work and dually encountered patriarchal structures in the home and school systems/administration (Acker 1995; Bahlieda 2008). This status of simultaneous essentialness and devaluation ascribed to women’s/feminised work, is essential to the ongoing subjugation that teachers (and other ‘care work’ professions seen as ‘women’s work’) face under discourses of misogyny and male supremacy. Without this pre-ordained and assumed inferiority, discourses of misogyny that allow for young men to disqualify women teachers as authority figures (Keddie 2007; Lahelma, Palmu, and Gordon 2000), and male administrators to downplay, disregard, or ignore acts of misogynist violence (Robinson 2000; Zhao, Roberts, and Wescott 2024) could not withstand social scrutiny.

We see this active double-binding as a reflection of statist power, one where we view the ‘state’, as Deleuze and Guattari did, ‘as a particular kind of institutional process that is produced through social relations that arise from believing in fixities and representation’ (Hickey-Moody 2019, 5). Here we understand fixities as rigid and binding elements of a gendered social order that prescribe upon women (and men) immutable ways of being in the world. It is through a series of what Deleuze and Guattari called refrains (repeated ideas or habits that anchor things into social place) and overcodings (imposed meanings that come from radical acts of silencing others) (DeLanda 2006; Hickey-Moody 2019) that we see a re-inscription of disadvantage on women-identified teachers in the classroom and the assertion of a mis-placed, neo-traditionalist male dominance by students (and some administrators). This disadvantage is redoubled when students engage with and take on the rhetorics of networked misogyny, ‘an especially virulent strain of violence and hostility towards women in online environments’ (Banet-Weiser and Miltner 2016, 171) presented to them through social media and their own networked digitality.

Within the context of schooling in the global North, contested or otherwise, teachers have a significant presence in the lives of children and communities, and exhibit some combination of academic, practical, technical, personal, and critical inquiry influence in their classrooms (Calderhead and Shorrock 1997). With hundreds of hours of direct student contact time in a school year, teachers are a specific type of cultural intermediary; simultaneously culturally significant and devalued, as well as frequently subjected to sexism and misogyny (Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff 2014; Graham and Flamini 2023). Knowing the broad impacts of teachers on student outcomes (Zbar, Marshall, and Power 2007), combined with findings that implicit teacher beliefs also have significant impacts on students (Callahan and Nicholas 2019; Denessen et al. 2022), provides support for the idea that teachers represent a group with significant cultural influence.

The following section explores social media and cultural influence for teachers and students more broadly.

Social media setting – teachers and students

Teachers and students are both involved in online platforms and social media spaces, though this involvement differs (different age groups engage with online community in different ways (Thayer and Ray 2006)). /r/Teachers is a sub-community of Reddit.com, 'Dedicated to open discussion about all things teaching' (Reddit.com 2024) with over 1M subscribers in August 2024. Topics discussed in the online community range across all aspects of teaching with 13 different flair options,⁴ mostly focused on primary and secondary students (ages 5–18). This research follows previous work on this community (Carpenter and Staudt Willet 2021; Na and Staudt Willet 2022; Staudt Willet and Carpenter 2021), as well as research on specific subreddit communities (e.g. Cousineau 2021a; DeCook 2019).

An extensive body of literature explores the influence that social media and content exposure have on young people (e.g. Martin et al. 2018; Orben and Blakemore 2023). Recently, this research has expanded to include the influences of the far-right and violent misogynist social media content on users – the vast majority of which is focused on the exploration of radical online masculinity or misogynist communities, including the manosphere and men's rights communities (Ging, Siapera, and 2019; Hodapp 2017; Krendel 2020), the pickup artist subculture (Cousineau 2021b; King 2018), and the violent misogyny of incels (DeCook and Kelly 2021; Halpin 2022). Even more directly related to the content explored in this paper are the works of authors like Linders, Dudink, and Spierings (2022) or Moskalenko et al. (2022) that speak to the effects of violent misogynistic radicalization that young men experience online. The ways that platforms either afford or actively promote pathways towards content consumption and (in some cases) radicalization are clear (Boatman 2019; Cousineau 2021a; Habib, Srinivasan, and Nithyanand 2022; Ribeiro et al. 2020).

Research that specifically examines impacts of Tate's brand of new-wave misogyny on teachers and classrooms is just beginning. This work adds to a growing body of international research in this field, demonstrating that, although our research is based predominately in North America, this problem affects teachers and youth across the globe. Wescott, Roberts, and Zhao (2024) recent article on Australian teachers and their experiences, Stahl, Keddie, and Adams's (2023) work troubling reactive surveillance of young men, as well as news media that specifically discusses his influence in schools (Bubola and Kwai 2023; Weale 2023), show that this influence is significant. Baker and colleagues with the Dublin City University Anti-Bullying Centre (2024) demonstrated that all male-identified accounts in their study of TikTok and YouTube short content feeds were provided masculinist, anti-feminist, and other extremist content. When these accounts showed any level of interaction with this problematic content (e.g. watching to the end, re-watching, watching related recommended content), it would subsequently appear more often in the users' feed.

We can further explore social media use by students and its implications for real-world misogynistic behaviours using Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) apparatus of capture. As a feature of social media use, we see young people (and in the case of misogyny, particularly young men) taken into communities and assuming collective identities of

membership (Gaudette et al. 2020). Collective identity, in the case of subjugating communities like those of the far-right and supremacist spaces online, creates both internal (within and between members of the community) and external social subjection – states of being under the power or control of another, real or imagined. This collective identity as apparatus of capture is powered by the cultural force of networked misogyny, indicative of misogyny's structural nature and widespread entrenchment in the social and cultural contexts of our lives – especially as those contexts translate into the digital (Banet-Weiser and Maddocks 2023; Boyle and Rathnayake 2020; Dickel and Evolvi 2023).

The indoctrination experienced by young men who consume and interact with misogynistic communities online is also reliant on the machinic enslavement of a youth sociality embedded in social media, where misogynistic content is ubiquitous and inescapable (Baker, Ging, and Andreasen 2024). Both the social subjection and machinic enslavement described here are integral parts of Deleuze and Guattari's apparatus of capture, where ubiquity creates a 'cloak of common sense' that 'masks the work [the state] is able to perform' (Jones and Duncan 2013, 204). In this case 'the state' represents the controlled and curated networked sociality of online misogyny (networked misogyny) and its power to control offline actions even in spaces of hierarchical power like schools. The young men who become adherents to the radicalization of these communities become what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe as 'constituent pieces of a machine that they compose among themselves ... under the control and direction of a higher unity' (457). This is not to overlook the agency involved in young boys' radicalization, whereby they create the audience through their engagement which drives the creation and perpetuation of masculinist content. 'The human being', Deleuze and Guattari say, 'is no longer a component of the machine but a worker, a user' (1987, 457). The individual is largely subsumed by communal expressions, in this case overt, but dated, misogyny.

It is at the intersections of social media use, cultural influence, and student consumption where we find the focus of this paper. While not every student/young person that is presented with this social media content falls into the workings of the machine, and we will see demonstrations of young-person resistance below, those that do pose particular threats. There is emerging literature that explores the influence and impacts of student consumption and interaction with misogynist content online and how its impacts are felt by teachers and other adults (Kosar et al. 2023; Waling 2022), but more is required in the exploration of how teachers are discussing and reacting to their real-life encounters with these discourses within teacher-specific social media spaces.

Methodology

Data collection

This study employed a modified version of what Staudt Willet (2019) calls 'digital traces' research. This approach to data collection and analysis from digital and social media sources produces a 'form of direct, unobtrusive participant observation, ... [that] avoids some of the pitfalls of self-reported data' (279). The concept of digital traces helps us to understand that while the content users leave behind on digital platforms is representative and authentic of at least some aspect of the users' lives, that these digital elements are simultaneously enduring and ephemeral. Other qualitative analysis of digital social media data sets has demonstrated that how users present themselves online can be

seen as a kind of authenticity of character, regardless of whether the user would replicate these actions offline (Morris and Anderson 2015). Users turn to /r/Teachers as a place to meet and discuss issues of teaching, much like a virtual teacher's lounge.

Data used for this study were collected using two custom scripts in the Python programming language (Python Software Foundation 2023) originally developed by K. Bret Staudt Willet (Na and Staudt Willet 2022; Staudt Willet and Carpenter 2021). These scripts collected all posts and all comments from the /r/Teachers subreddit from 1 June 2022 to 31 January 2023 through the Reddit API.⁵ We then filtered this dataset to contain only posts where Andrew Tate was mentioned in the post title or text.⁶ The final data set for this research consisted of all posts and comments that matched our search criteria and included 2364 content items. This data did not include any posts or comments by moderators or admin.

Analysis

For analysis both authors independently coded half of the total dataset (approximately 1150 content items each), creating independent code-sets for the data. A data-driven, inductive analysis approach was used to create code-sets, responding to what appears in the data rather than based off researchers' preconceptions of what will be found (Braun and Clarke 2022; Terry et al. 2017). The authors then cross-compared their codes to check for symmetry and differences resulting in a collaborative codebook for the dataset. The benefits of collaborative coding are supported by Saldaña (2016) who suggests that this collaboration can result in important dialogue while creating a shared interpretation of data and, consequently, richer codes. This codebook was then used to code the entire dataset, followed by the grouping of codes into potential themes. The creation of themes allows for the understanding of content to be re-focused in broad terms, shifting to analysis of how this content fits within research questions (Braun and Clarke 2022). These themes were refined through a second round of coding and resulted in a final thematic analysis of the dataset.

Results

Our data showed that teachers are feeling a variety of impacts from the discourses of misogyny championed by Andrew Tate, and the results of this study are divided into three major themes. The first is questions about what these rhetorics and ideas do to teachers, as individuals and professionals. The second is how misogynistic rhetorics impact the classroom environment for students and teachers. Lastly, we will examine the solutions proposed by those in the /r/Teachers forum, a divided case, with many wanting to take responsibility in confronting the issue, while others feel dismissive.

As a note for the reader, in this manuscript quotes from /r/Teachers are presented in two ways. The first is with quotation marks and regular text. Quotes presented in this way are from one of two groups. The first is quotes that researchers were given permission to use by the posting user. The second are quotes where the posting user account is deleted from Reddit and/or the post has been deleted since data collection. In these cases, the user comments are not traceable through search and not attributable to specific individuals. The second is comments in quotation marks with *italic* text (e.g. '*comment*'). In this case, users still have active accounts on Reddit but did not respond

to requests to use verbatim quotes. In these cases, the researchers have used an AI paraphrasing tool, Quillbot (v15.568.2), to paraphrase the comment, verified its fidelity with the original user comment, and included the paraphrased version in the manuscript to obfuscate the user (see Fitria 2021 or <https://quillbot.com/paraphrasing-tool> for more on this tool). Usernames are omitted in all cases.

What does this do to teachers?

Most prominent of the discussions in /r/Teachers about Tate's influence was the direct impacts on the teachers themselves, especially on women-identifying teachers.

Gender and teachers. The most significant impact on teachers in our study is encountering misogynist discourses tied to male supremacy (Ebin 2021). Many of the teachers in our data express struggling with classroom management because of how young men are expressing themes from the sexist media they are consuming. 'The majority of them are 13-year-old boys, and I'm a 23-year-old woman', said one teacher, 'so to expect any respect at all from them is a pipe dream, especially considering the online cultural phenomenon Andrew Tate has become.' This user is echoed by others, demonstrating that this is a widespread symptom of misogynistic online content in classrooms. 'There was a group of them, all friends, who to the VP's face told him that they would only respect/pay attention in classes taught by men and would not behave in classes taught by women.' One teacher put the gender-related nature of the problem very plainly: 'If they already have trouble respecting someone simply because that person happens to have a vagina, then they aren't going to listen to that person with a vagina explain how disrespecting people with a vagina is harmful. Boys are clearly adopting misogynistic views and bringing them to the classroom. *'Seemingly, ninety percent of my work is trying to talk white teenage boys off the alt-right ledge'*', expressed one user; a ledge that is at risk of threatening the safety of a school environment.

Classroom environment

Leading authors on ethics and law in Canadian education have explained that 'one of the primary roles of teachers in modern schooling is to ensure the safety of their students and to create conditions for their well-being' (Maxwell, Gereluk, and Martin 2022, 93). Our data shows that exposure to Andrew Tate's rhetoric can have a significant impact on safety in the classroom environment and has caused youth to engage in public misogyny.

Gender dynamics in the classroom. Beyond the gendered nature of the altered power relationship between teachers and students discussed above, the public misogyny in the classroom certainly poses a risk to the women and girls who witness it.

I work in a faculty that's entirely female (other than myself), and sometimes their experiences make me wonder if we are teaching in the same school ... Or at least I would if I hadn't taught those same very disrespectful students with no problems in the past. There's a lot of misogyny in teenage boys.

This user's claim is supported by many other stories of teachers facing misogynistic actions from male students in the classroom. For example,

My BIL teaches 7th grade and said the boys in his class have taken to calling all women and girls “holes”, and any boy who is friendly or polite to girls a “simp”. One boy was bold enough to ask his female coworker how she’d keep her husband if she didn’t have that wetwet, to roaring laughter.

Regardless of its impacts on gender in the classroom, pushing back against public misogyny may carry personal or professional consequences. Accordingly, users on /r/Teachers suggest the possibility of leaving this pushback to female students. Some educators have tried this method, saying ‘honestly [Tate] wasn’t even on my radar until June last year when one male student brought him up. Fortunately my female students called him out.’ Another found this strategy of peer-to-peer policing to be highly effective in preventing notions of misogyny like this from re-surfacing in the classroom; ‘I let girls in my class eviscerate the kid who brought him up once and havent heard from another Tater Tot since.’ This strategy of peer reproach relies on a classroom dynamic that permits and encourages students to speak their minds, and teachers’ confidence that students are able to engage with the topic and each other in a way where everyone stays safe; a strategy that may not be possible in every classroom.

Some teachers also play into heteronormative presumptions to prompt girls’ pushback and/or to limit boys’ expressions of misogyny,

Because the boys wouldn’t listen to me, I eventually just asked the girls to tell the boys why it’s ridiculous. The majority of the girls swore they’d never date a boy who admired Andrew Tate and I didn’t hear his name again.

The heteronormativity of this approach notwithstanding, this technique has proven effective in some instances.

Safety. There is also worry in /r/Teachers that the rise in misogynistic rhetoric will lead to tangible safety threats like gender-based violence in schools, with many teachers describing experiences of such violence (despite the systems’ hesitancy to name it). ‘Andrew Tate is a real danger to young boys. And girls, by nature of the infection he causes to boys.’ An example of the ‘Tate infection’ is explained by another user’s experience,

I had a student write a paper in graphic detail bout how SA victims ‘deserved’ it and ‘all women were asking for it’ and a lot of other extremely alarming sentiments. The paper topic was nowhere close to anything like this, but he wrote it anyway.

These expressions of concern about student safety due to violent misogyny reflect a frightening new phenomenon for many teachers, ‘I’ve never heard such vitriol from young boys since this Andrew Tate guy came on the scene. This rise of incel and misogynistic rhetoric is terrifying.’ The effects on girls are especially prescient for some users, ‘*The issue with their ranting about Andrew Tate is that it only serves to demonstrate to the girls that they are never safe, not even at school. There will be a misogynistic idiot.*’ Andrew Tate’s popularity and, consequently, the spread of his rhetoric is clearly perceived as a threat to safety in schools, both in the way his ideas are parroted by male students and through the direct impacts teachers see on themselves and perceive on female students.

What do we do now?

Teachers in our sample expressed concern for the ‘Andrew Tate effect’ but are left with many unknowns about how to best deal with this phenomenon; ‘Other than the fact

that I am aware of his controversial nature, I have no idea what to say. I want to be able to have discussions without taking sides. Any recommendations? Among the discussions in this area, the most prominent is whether to dismiss or confront Tate's rhetoric in the classroom. Given the expectation of teachers to remain 'apolitical' and neutral in their teaching (Pollock et al. 2022), the difficulty in navigating this issue is legitimate.

Disregard the phenomenon. Some teachers have decided that it is best to simply not respond to Andrew Tate and associated discourse at all, believing that Tate's views are not explicitly problematic or dangerous on their own. For example, one user suggested to '*refrain from policing the topics they discuss unless there is a clear and present problem*' and further, '*An alpha douche type is naturally someone that middle school boys, who are themselves amateur douchebags, look up to. This has been going on for perhaps twenty-five years, since I was their age. It's not harmful.*' Others disregard the rhetoric with the idea that students are parroting the content primarily for attention.

That kind of young boy likes to be ironically edgy because they're testing boundaries. They are aware of Andrew Tate's controversial nature and the potential backlash they may face if they bring him or his thoughts up in class. Since their intention is to insult and appall, the more you resist this kind of behavior, the more it rewards them.

Confront the phenomenon. On the other side of this issue are users who believe this rhetoric needs to be confronted – 'Looking forward to squashing this nonsense in my classroom' – and many share their experiences in doing so. 'After I overheard my 5th graders discussing him, I straight up told them, 'Andrew Tate is pure evil. Don't let his sexist beliefs influence you. I don't know if you are, but I know we're all better than that.' For some users, Reddit becomes a place where they can find resources and brainstorm ideas for handling misogyny, with discussion of how to go about this seemingly new aspect of the teacher job description.

When you witness students acting in a misogynistic way, it's important to call them out on it, allow them room to grow, and support them in doing so. If you hear something sexist, try: "That's not cool man! You're a good man, you don't genuinely believe that, do you?"

Other strategies include, 'calling home and explaining exactly what each boy said & pulling up his videos. Moms were mortified & said they'd stay on top of them. We'll see as the week & year progresses!', while other teachers are incorporating Tate into their lessons – 'I let my students debate 'Is Andrew Tate a G.⁷' In confronting this behaviour, teachers send a message about which ideals and expectations are to be upheld in their classrooms, with the hope that, given teachers' significant influence on their students, students will carry these values as active participants in society.

Discussion

The rise of violent misogyny signifies cause for concern especially while young boys are idolizing and parroting the rhetorics of Andrew Tate and similar figures. It is clear from our research that Tate and other masculinist grifters are impacting teachers, the classroom, and North American school environments, adding to the growing body of international research with similar conclusions like Wescott, Roberts, and Zhao (2024) in Australia,

Ging and colleagues (Baker, Ging, and Andreasen 2024; Ging et al. 2024) in the EU, and the focus of recent Countering Violence and Extremism programs in New Zealand (Government of New Zealand 2020). We should be alarmed, but not at all surprised, by the many examples of overt misogyny shared in this paper given the long-standing precedent for how women teachers are treated by boys in the classroom (Keddie 2007; Lahelma, Palmu, and Gordon 2000; Robinson 2000) and the well-documented resurgence of male supremacist and patriarchal statist powers in North America and elsewhere (Ebin 2021; Hickey-Moody 2019; Neiwert 2017). In the literature that links masculinity, male supremacism, and violent misogyny (see Arbeit et al. 2022; Ebin 2021; Habib, Srinivasan, and Nithyanand 2022 for some examples), overt and public expressions of anti-woman, anti-feminist, and violent misogynist feelings are the most common precursors to violence – the ability to express these views in public with little or no consequence empowers and emboldens the expressions. Examples of teachers appealing to administrators for support and receiving none, or behaviours being explained away as ‘boys will be boys’ are excellent examples of this phenomenon from our research. This ‘resurgent male supremacy’ forms an active part of teachers’ experience in the classroom (Zhao, Roberts, and Wescott 2024, 9). The fact that we can identify these incidents, understand that they are increasing in frequency, and attribute them (in part) to the digital content of a small group of influence peddlers (or even a single person) is cause for concern and alarm.

We have long had a theoretical roadmap for what techno-linked refrains and processes of social overcoding would look like for masculinist ideology. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) predicted both the subsumption of the individual into collective machinic ideology (the ideologically adherent community user) and the ongoing indoctrination that occurred in those ideological spaces (the ‘black box’ of digital media algorithms that control our content, and therefore most of our lives, inclusive of social media, search, and entertainment, among others). The common language (e.g. “Top-G”), consistent behaviours across schools and settings we see in reports from various users, and the persistence of a single individual as an avatar for this type of subjugating behaviour are all evidence of networked misogyny embodied through Deleuze and Guattari’s theory. They also predicted the subjugation of people, both users and others, to the machine rather than *enslavement* by the machine as an apparatus of capture (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 458). These predictive accuracies are essential in generating the outcomes that we see in our /r/Teachers data as they provide a *why* and *how* for the overt and sometimes aggressive ignorance of social power, hierarchy, and respect that is required for boys to so directly and openly enact misogynistic violence.

We also know that experiencing these types of overt (in this case non-physical) violence can be traumatic for women and girls; teaching girls that it may not be safe for them at school and problematizing relationships of authority for teachers (Horeck et al. 2023; Hunehäll Berndtsson and Odenbring 2021). This effect is clear in our data where users of /r/Teachers who identify as women (or present as women in their comments) express real fear about what might happen to them: ‘this rise of incel and misogynistic rhetoric is terrifying’, and in their schools, ‘I had many boys make lewd and sexual comments towards me and other girls to just have the VP brush it off as ‘boys will be boys.’ The second quote here points starkly to the systemic nature of misogyny in (some) schools and school systems, calling back to the paternalistic and persistent dismissal of teaching as low-value care work. When administrators, teachers’ only real

defence against systemic issues, buy into or perpetuate those issues, their impacts are enhanced. Teachers then face a kind of misogynistic double-bind where they experience gendered marginalization from their pupils and their institutions of employment (Wescott and Roberts 2025).

As we explored in the background section, even as capitalism has forced the inclusion of women broadly in the workforce, the machine of ‘naturalized’ male power seeks to (re)define (through refrains of male supremacism and the overcoding of social progress with regressive rhetoric) this work as ‘lesser than.’ The overcoding of teaching as women’s work continues to serve its purpose of maintaining ‘state’ power over 150 years later by devaluing teaching, but also by rendering subordinate ‘groups of social relations and desires’, – women, and especially women teachers – ‘to the regulatory function of the despotic signifier and incorporated in an overarching statist totality;’ (re)establishment of a fulsome male supremacy (Hickey-Moody 2019, 5). This is both a function and purpose of the networked misogyny that powers these refrains and overcodes, creating what Dickel and Evolvi (2023) call a ‘support system for men to spread sexist narratives in online and offline settings’ (4).

Conclusion

The users of /r/Teachers show us that there are significant and direct effects of misogyny and online male supremacy in the classroom and on teachers. Along with veiled attacks on individuals, users clearly demonstrate that there are reasons for concern in the safety and wellbeing of students and school environments. There are direct impacts on teachers’ ability/desire to remain as classroom educators, and on school and classroom atmospheres which also impact students, staff, and families.

The commonalities in the ways misogynist behaviour presents for the users of /r/Teachers demonstrates both the power and ubiquity of the networked misogyny at its heart. The young men who are the focus of our users’ comments are both affected by and openly repeat the refrains of misogyny they experience online. They are supported by an intersection of male supremacism with digital culture and its overcoding of student-teacher hierarchy with age-independent gendered dominance. The result is a not-insignificant number of boys and young men who ‘aren’t going to listen to that person with a vagina explain how disrespecting people with a vagina is harmful.’

While perhaps easily dismissed as the immature actions of boys, to make the choice to ignore or downplay the profound impacts of deep misogyny in the elementary, middle, and high school settings does a deep disservice to equity work and the role of schools in creating a better future. Schools have always taught more than the curriculum, implicitly teaching things such as values and social norms, but when progressive social norms are overcoded by neo-traditional male supremacist ideas about gender and power, we are in significant danger of re-emerging threats to social equity and personal safety.

Notes

1. These legal proceedings continue to unfold as of this writing, but Tate is out of jail and active on a variety of platforms as of June 2025. He has also been charged with a variety of crimes in the UK.

2. While it is possible that users from our study community are contributing from outside North America, Americans form a majority of Reddit users and the majority of posts on /r/teachers signal to North American classrooms.
3. We acknowledge here the significant and intersectional experiences of teachers that are further minoritized and marginalized (e.g., racialized, 2SLGBTQ+ teachers), but the scope of this paper is insufficient to be able to explore these vital experiences and issues along with the impacts on teachers who identify as women.
4. Flair in the context of Reddit.com is a way of topic-tagging posts that allows users to better sort content for their own consumption. Some example flairs from /r/Teachers include, 'SUCCESS!', 'Humor', 'Career & Interview Advice', 'Classroom Management & Strategies', and 'Bad Teacher, No Apple'.
5. An API, or Application Programming Interface, is a set of rules that allow applications or software programs to interact with one-another. In this case, the Reddit API allows third-party applications or academics to collect information from Reddit and process it in a variety of ways. Additional note: Since this data was collected, Reddit has made significant changes to its API, who can access it, and how it can be accessed.
6. This filtering included Andrew Tate's name (e.g., Andrew Tate; Tate) as well as well-known other names used to refer to the influencer including Cobra Tate, Top G, and Emory Tate.
7. The use of the letter "G" in this way is signifier for a person worthy of admiration.

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