Radicalised Masculinity: Ontological Security, Extremist Ideologies, and the Rise of Andrew Tate

June 2023

2715941L
21110972
97528038

Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree
of
International Masters in Security, Intelligence and
Strategic Studies

Word Count: 20998
Supervisor: Dr Rebecca Kay
Date of Submission: 26 July 2023

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Former professional kickboxer, Andrew Tate rose to notoriety in 2022 as an internet personality who racked up billions of views on TikTok ranting about 'male dominance, female submission and wealth' (Haq, 2023). Often speaking directly to the camera while wearing designer clothes and smoking a cigar, Tate's content hit a chord with a large audience of young men and he is widely celebrated for 'having brought back 'traditional masculinity'' (Hope Not Hate, 2022: 1). In August 2022, he was banned from most mainstream social media sites for violating platform policies on gender-based hate-speech, violence and sexual content. This has done little to stop the spread of his online following, as Tate's supporters post up to 300 videos a day of him on their personal accounts (ibid: 1), effectively nullifying any attempts to deplatform him.

To some, Tate is a misunderstood social satirist playing a comic character to draw attention to the 'sad' state of masculinity in modern society; his attempted 'cancelling' is symptomatic of the mainstream establishment trying to eliminate a threat. However, to others, the success of Andrew Tate is indicative of a concerning and growing acceptance of extreme misogyny and far right ideologies within the mainstream lexicon; Tate himself has been associated with English Defence League co-founder Tommy Robinson (ibid: 1). While the cross-pollination of ideologies between misogynistic communities and the far right through social media has been of growing academic concern, the dominating presence of Andrew Tate on TikTok demonstrates that this relationship is no longer confined to the fringes of the internet. Instead, the growing popularity of right-wing politics and the increase of hate speech across social media platforms demonstrates an acceptance of this language and ideologies.

Early theorists hoped that the internet would be an independent place for knowledge production and sharing, devoid of the social hierarchies that govern real world communication. They theorised that the online and the offline worlds could exist as separate spheres, and that actions in one would not carry

repercussions in the other (Herath and Whittaker, 2021). However, as reliance on the internet has grown, it is clear this is not the case. The internet has become a platform where aggrieved individuals can connect, creating echo chambers and rabbit holes where digital solidarity indicates that a group's ideologies are not unusual or even that extreme (Chavez, 2022). The narratives of these online groups have found their way offline in examples of violence and hate speech towards woman and minorities. It is clear that extreme misogyny has become both an offline *and* an online problem. Traditional conceptions of security fail to account for these actions as a security problem, however the impact and reach of these narratives suggests that a more personal interpretation of security is required to account for these threats within the modern 'hybrid' world.

1.1 Relevance to Security Studies

In May 2023, while this thesis was being written, a gunman opened fire in a carpark in Allen, Texas; he killed eight people and wounded seven others before he was shot dead by an intervening police officer. Subsequent investigation revealed the shooter had an extensive online footprint, with an obvious affinity for neo-Nazi and white supremacist content as well as that of the incel movement (for further information on incels, see section 3.3) (Wells, 2023). The clear overlap of ideologies exemplified by this attack demonstrates the complex motivations that drive an individual to commit an act of mass violence. While not all who engage with these extreme ideologies commit violent attacks, extreme misogyny has been a common thread 'across most forms of terrorism and violent extremism over the past two decades' (ibid). This attack is one of a growing number that is understood as partially motivated by a hatred towards women.

There is a clear connection between online actions and offline security. In 2022, Canada announced terrorism charges against a 17-year-old boy who had killed a 24-year-old woman at a massage parlour; an attack said to be motivated by incel ideology (Hayes and Freeze, 2020). In utilising terrorism charges, Canada clearly framed violence rooted in misogyny as a matter of state security. Afterall, terrorism is broadly understood as a matter of the state – it is

the unlawful use of violence against civilians, to spread fear and promote political aims (Koehler, 2017: 52). It is an issue of state security as it represents a threat to sovereignty and the physical safety of the state. However, not all states agree with Canada's approach. The United States, for example, does not consider ideological misogyny as a terror threat on the same scale as other extreme ideologies (Beckett, 2021). This suggests a need for a different conceptualisation of security when considering events motivated by extreme misogyny. A human security approach foregrounds the impact on the individual: therefore, gender-based violence becomes a security issue because it threatens the humans. Yet this can be taken one step further: an ontological security approach enables misogynistic communities to be framed as a security threat not just because of the insecurity they cause their victims, but also because of the insecurity these communities promote within their group members.

Therefore, understanding the themes present within these online extremist communities and how influential content creators create material that resonates with the audience is fundamental to understanding the threat that these groups pose. While violence against women is not a new occurrence, the cross-pollination of the Manosphere with politically motivated extreme right cells does represent the possibility of mobilisation and a new form of threat to the security of the general population. Afterall, although 'misogynist incels are often perceived as a movement without political aims, violent perpetrators have the same type of far-reaching aims that white nationalists have: to completely change the culture and politics of society to favor their own group' (DiBranco in Beckett, 2021).

1.2 Focus and Scope

Michael Kimmel's concept of 'aggrieved entitlement' specifically links hegemonic masculinity and ontological insecurity (2017). Kimmel posits that globalisation results in more multi-cultural societies and liberal political environments, and the previous (often cis, white, heterosexual male) beneficiaries of those entrenched structural hierarchies feel threatened and insecure as at the perceived attack on the structures and assumptions that their

identity is based on. He explains that there is a 'sense of entitlement thwarted by larger economic and political shifts, their ambitions choked, their masculinity lost' (2017: 1). As a result of this self-perceived marginalisation, these men claim the title of victim, and express their distaste at their new status through anger. They seek revenge, and to reinstate hegemonic masculinity, as a means to reclaim that security. It is here that Kimmel places violent action, used as a tool in this journey to reclaim power.

This thesis seeks to examine the manifestations of ontological (in)security and hegemonic masculinity within content ascribed to the extreme misogynist community as a method of appealing to an insecure masculine audience. Andrew Tate serves as a mainstream, popular example of the broader appeal of these narratives. While he does not outwardly encourage incidents of mass violence, his content does align with that of more extreme communities and incurs the risk of acting as a 'gateway' to more violent communities; a previously observed phenomenon within this space (DiBranco, 2020).

So far, events of incel/misogyny motivated mass violence remain a largely Western phenomenon: a majority of attacks that have taken place have been in North America or in Western Europe. This is not to say that other areas of the world do not have an issue with gendered violence, however only incidents within the global West are being tied to online misogynistic communities at this point. Although the internet exists as a transnational, borderless entity and participation in these misogynistic communities is global (Herath and Whittaker, 2021: 1030), this thesis maintains a largely western-centric focus as this is where most of the attacks, and critical literature, exist.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this thesis is to identify how the themes in the TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate align with narratives perpetuated by the Manosphere and the far-right. Additionally, this thesis also seeks to examine how his content utilises themes of ontological insecurity and hegemonic masculinity to promote these narratives, with the aim to better understand why this content is successful.

Therefore, the research question that guided this thesis is: *How does the TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate utilise themes of ontological insecurity and hegemonic masculinity to promote extremist ideologies?*

To this end, two key aims were identified:
1. Identify the key themes within the TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate.
2. Critically evaluate these themes with consideration to the ideologies perpetuated by online misogynistic communities.

To answer this research question and fulfil the aims, this thesis will undertake a thorough literature review to establish how the far-right, the Manosphere and hegemonic masculinity are linked. A thematic analysis of the TikTok videos that directly feature Andrew Tate is situated within a framework of ontological (in)security theory. Through this approach, I hope to uncover not only how the content of Andrew Tate normalises extreme rhetoric but also how it directly relies on feelings of security and insecurity within his audience to gain affect.

1.4 A Note on Positionality

Before moving forward, I would like to reflect on my positionality as a researcher and how it impacts this thesis. I consider myself a feminist researcher and approached this research having conducted prior investigations into gender roles during civil conflict in Northern Ireland. I have chosen to focus on the relationship between gender and the far-right consistently throughout my post-graduate degree.

My choice to study masculinity, the far-right and Andrew Tate came from a morbid fascination with the prevalence of his content in the social media feeds of my own inner-circle; friends that, to my understanding, were not active in the communities that Tate's content would traditionally belong to, were stumbling across his content regularly. I saw this as a broadening of the Overton

Window[1], and a concerning step towards the mainstream acceptance of hate speech towards woman and the ideologies perpetuated by the Manosphere. Additionally, as a woman (albeit a white, privileged one), my choice to study this topic also stemmed from a concern for how the acceptance of the misogynistic and extreme ideologies perpetuated by influencers such as Andrew Tate could affect the long-term security of women. It is clear that my positionality not only affected what topic I chose, but also how I shaped the research process, and how I interpreted the results.

1.5 Structure

This thesis will first begin by defining the key concepts of gender and hegemonic masculinity. Subsequently, a review of the existing literature will establish the cross-pollination between the far-right, the extreme right and the Manosphere as well as identify the clear research gap in regard Manosphere influencers on TikTok. The concept of ontological (in)security will then be established, intertwined with the concept of securitisation of subjectivity to pose a gendered approach to ontological insecurity theory as the framework of this thesis. Following this, the methodology will be introduced. This section will outline how data was gathered utilising approaches from other studies and then interpreted and analysed using thematic analysis. The results of this analysis will be split into two parts: the first part will explore themes of insecurity and the second, themes of security to demonstrate that while these narratives do align with that of more extreme, and actively violent, groups, they also create feelings of security and insecurity within their audience. Finally, the conclusion will summarise the findings of this research and pose potential pathways for future study.

---

[1] The Overton Window, first conceptualised by American political analyst Joseph Overton, is an approach to identifying the range of political discourse deemed acceptable by the public at a given time. It can shift to the left or right depending on the inputs. One of the factors that will lead to rapid shift will be a major societal-wide crisis. For further information, see Mackinac Center, 2019.

2. Key Concepts

Before progressing, it is important to outline a number of key concepts on which this thesis relies. Firstly, the definition of gender will be presented to separate the analytical stance which I am taking in this study from the approach of Andrew Tate and comparable figures. Secondly, hegemonic masculinity will be defined to ensure conceptual clarity moving forwards. It must be noted that the academic debate surrounding both gender and hegemonic masculinity is extensive and will not be fully engaged with as it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

2.1 The Fraught Task of Defining Gender

The content explored in this thesis engages with gender through biological essentialism: the belief that 'there are only two genders and that those genders are directly connected to human biology. [These] genders […] are also held to be comprised of two distinct "biological sexes'' (Strunk, 2021: 55). To biological essentialists, 'gender identity and sex, as assigned at birth, are inseparable and biologically determined' (ibid: 55). While this is often the stance taken by individuals such as Andrew Tate and echoed throughout online misogynistic communities, this is not my opinion as author of this thesis.

From an analytical point of view, this thesis follows feminist theoretical conventions and differentiates between 'gender' as a social and cultural construction and 'sex' as a biological category. Sex is used in reference to the biological differences between males and females (Pryzgoda and Chrisler, 2000: 554), whereas gender typically refers to the social construction of masculinity and femininity as binary categories. Masculinity and femininity account for the behaviours and characteristics socially framed as either female or male and are reinforced through socialisation (Runyan and Peterson, 2015: 58). Biological males are expected to accomplish masculinity and biological females, femininity. It must be noted that this is not always the case. While sex is often considered something 'real' as 'the material or corporeal ground upon which gender operates as an act of cultural inscription' (Butler, 1990: 146), gender is

instead seen as an 'act' that is reinforced and reproduced throughout society and history.

In most cultures, masculinity and femininity exist at 'two poles of a dichotomy- as mutually exclusive or oppositions— that define each other' (Peterson and Runyan, 2015: 58). While masculinity may be conceptualised through traits of strength, independence, assertion, toughness, rationality and control, femininity is often defined in opposition: weakness, dependence, naivety, emotionality and unpredictability (ibid: 58). Runyan and Peterson note that such a dichotomized approach to gender constructs a hierarchical relationship where masculinity is deemed superior to femininity; instead of being considered as a separate category (masculinity *and* femininity), femininity is defined by what it is not (masculinity and *not*-masculinity) (ibid: 60). From this, they outline that the hierarchical construction of masculinity and femininity contributes to the social subjugation of women. While not all men will achieve the dominant model of masculinity supported by that society, they all 'reap a patriarchal dividend: "the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women" […]' (ibid: 58).

Using the understanding of sex as a biological category and gender as a social construction as a starting point, this thesis moves forward to engage with masculinity more thoroughly.

2.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

The dominant model of masculinity referred to in the previous section is often understood as hegemonic masculinity, finding its roots in the concept of the 'hegemony' as understood by British cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall. For Hall, a hegemony was an authority defined by its constantly changing nature 'shaped by opposing forces' and implicitly linked to neo-liberalism (Worth, 2021: 507). Hall believed that for the hegemony to survive, it must be promoted and perpetuated by the population and its political elites. Commonly held beliefs and narratives could be reimagined and retrofitted to align with the pre-existing ideas of the hegemony and thereby find acceptance (Hall, 1988: 169). Therefore,

by positioning themselves as protectors of neoliberal hegemony, defending against multi-culturalism, globalisation and free movement, opposition parties can find legitimacy in otherwise extreme ideologies and policies. Academic Owen Worth argues that the rise of radical right parties in Europe, the election of Donald Trump and the success of the Brexit campaign are all indicative of the far-right contestation of the neo-liberal project and should be understood as victorious hijackings of the hegemony (Worth, 2021: 507).

Raweyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity builds on this idea of competing social forces to explore the basic idea of masculinity in its 'culturally idealised form' (Donaldson, 1993: 645). Jewkes et al. pose that the common conception of hegemonic masculinity within academic literature is

> a set of values, established by men in power that functions to include and exclude, and to organize society in gender unequal ways. It combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities, differential access among men to power (over women and other men), and the interplay between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power, and patriarchy (2015: 113).

In short, this model similarly recognises masculinity as a fluid and ever-changing concept. It acknowledges that a hegemonic norm may not be the statistically 'normal' expression of masculinity within a society as 'only a minority of men might enact it', but that it is 'normative'. It [embodies] the current, most honoured 'way of being a man, it [requires] all men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically [legitimates] the global subordination of women to men'(Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 883). While not all men achieve hegemonic masculinity, they benefit from the patriarchal system it supports. Hegemonic masculinity is not a 'natural or inherent' condition but a clear social construction (Vito, Admire and Hughes, 2017: 88). It is a singular view of masculinity, that while not embodied by every man, can serve as a useful framework to explain the legitimisation of masculinities within social groups or social interactions (eg. Morrell, Jewkes, and Lindegger, 2012).

While what is, and is not, considered hegemonically masculine does change, there are some constants that remain, such as 'aggression, toughness, hardness, ableness, and competitiveness' (Whitehead in Vito, Admire and Hughes, 2017: 88). More specifically, physical strength, height and size are held as an ideal. The male body is presented as an instrument of power, and those who do not achieve, or are not seen to be attempting to achieve 'the ideal body risk appearing less masculine or feminized' (ibid: 89). Similarly, hegemonic masculinity can be expanded beyond appearance or character traits, to shape male-female interactions. There is considerable academic consensus that a key characteristic of hegemonic masculinity is the presumed entitlement to women as sexual objects (eg Christensen and Jensen, 2014), as heterosexual sex is considered a legitimising achievement: an act of becoming a 'proper man'. In contrast, failing to have heterosexual sex becomes emasculating, signalling sexual incompetence or virginity that could lower an individual's status as a man, among other men. As Vito, Admire and Hughes state 'one's position in the social hierarchy hinges on his success with women where the sexual marketplace confers higher status to men who have frequent heterosexual sex […] rendering women as sexual objects to validate men's sense of manhood […]' (2018: 88). Therefore, in many western societies, achieving hegemonic masculinity not only requires physical appearance and correct behaviours but also successful sexual relationships with women.

The hierarchical nature of hegemonic masculinity dictates that those who subscribe to this representation see it as the superior position – directly constructed in relation to women and subordinated masculinities (Connell, 2002:62). It is 'premised on the maintenance of patriarchy and heterosexuality, and hence, gay or transmen who stand in opposition to heterosexual norms exemplify subordinate forms of masculinity' (Kumar and Mukherjee, 2021). Subordinated masculinities are less well defined but are implicitly tied to femininity and homosexuality. They are deemed to not 'conform to what is accepted as 'masculine' in a given social or contextual setting' and are therefore deemed lesser (Buschmeyer and Lengersdorf, 2016: 193). These masculinities are non-homogenic and vary in class, sexuality and ethnicity. However, the growing acceptance of these other manifestations of masculinity within broader

society is deemed by some as a direct threat to the dominance and legitimacy of more traditional manifestations – fearing a zero-sum relationship, some individuals believe that the growing acceptance of alternative masculinities will result in, or is already resulting in, the relegation, subordination, and eventual persecution of hegemonic masculinity. These individuals then seek to secure and protect their dominant masculinity through aggression, attempted domination, and anti-feminism (Smith et al., 2015: 164).

Hegemonic masculinity thereby exists as a standard of manhood that most men fail to achieve. Similarly, it is a model of masculinity that is threatened by rapidly changing societal expectations and values. Often, those who feel this manhood is in crisis or under threat, respond with violence, and anti-feminism alongside claims of victimisation.

These concepts form the basis of understanding moving forward.

3. Literature Review

In this section, previous relevant research will be presented to help situate this work within the broader academic study. The connection between far-right extremism and social media will first be established, before moving on to link this ideology with hegemonic masculinity and the Manosphere. Finally, the existing trends in Manosphere research will be observed and extended to account for TikTok, demonstrating the importance of this work to the overall study of online extremism and misogyny.

3.1 Extremism and Social Media Platforms

After its introduction, social media was quickly adopted by extremist groups who had already embraced the freedom of the internet. The unique characteristics of the medium, namely its lack of geographic constrictions, 'anonymity, minimal barriers […] and the negligible cost of publishing or accessing content', made the sharing of controversial ideas easier than ever (Aldera et al., 2021: 42385). While early literature theorises that actions on the internet could be separated into online and offline spheres, its overwhelming presence in day-to-day life demonstrates that this is not the case. As of January 2022, there were roughly 4.8 billion social media users across the globe, accounting for 59.9% of the total population (Statista, 2023). The prevalent role of the internet in recent violent attacks, such as the Capitol Insurrection, 2021, and the Christchurch Massacre, 2019, similarly demonstrates that communities and ideologies online can have a direct impact on daily lived experience (Leitch and Pickering, 2022: 2-4). Accordingly, academics are recognising that it is more useful to consider blends of online and offline behaviour when engaging with the radicalisation of extremist communities on the internet (ie Herath and Whittakar, 2021); radicalization, here, used to 'refer to the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs' (Borum, 2012: 9). There is growing academic consensus that engaging with extreme content in the online realm can have a direct, and sometime devastating, impact on relationships and actions in the offline world.

Indeed, the proliferation of extremist content can no longer be considered the hallmark of outlier communities in web-based chatrooms but instead a mainstay of the most popular platforms. Individuals and groups utilise sites such as Twitter and Facebook to disseminate their ideologies without fear of being censored by traditional media outlets (Alvari et al., 2019: 43). A large amount of academic attention has been paid to identifying the narratives of right-wing extremists within these spaces. Following the takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk in 2022, the Anti-Defamation League reported a return of 'extremists of all kinds' to the platform, citing a concern that it will 'supercharge the spread of extremist content and disinformation' available to a mainstream audience (Center on Extremism, 2022). Preliminary research demonstrates that the ADL's fears were justified; the Washington Post has released analysis that demonstrates that Twitter is 'amplifying hate speech on its 'For You' timeline, an unintended side effect of an algorithm that is supposed to show users more of what they want' (Siddiqui and Merrill, 2023). Using 4 'sock-puppet' accounts, Siddiqui and Merrill demonstrate that accounts were recommended antisemitic, anti-globalisation and neo-nazi content despite not following similar accounts. Their findings align with that of Froio and Ganesh (2019), and McSwiney (2021), who determine that there is an uncomfortable mainstreaming and promotion of extremist materials across Twitter and Facebook.

Similarly, Max Fisher's book *The Chaos Machine: The Inside Story of How Social Media Rewired Our Minds and Our World* outlines the ease with which the radical right have utilised video sharing platforms to similar ends. Due to the sheer quantity of radical content available on YouTube, an individual can become desensitized and soon find themselves in the company of 'hatemongers, incels, and conspiracy theorists' (Fisher, 2022: 215-217). Fisher demonstrates how YouTube's 'recommendation' feature will steer the passive viewer towards more extreme content. There is growing body of work that demonstrates that social media, in all forms, has contributed to a shift in the 'Overton Window', 'the range of ideas tolerated in public discourse' (Conway, 2020: 111). It has given a voice and sense of community to those who have failed to be heard in the past: normalising previously unacceptable ideologies

While platforms such as Youtube, Facebook, Twitter and Reddit are well documented as case studies for the mainstreaming of extremist ideologies, activities on TikTok remain an understudied area. Indeed, a large number of studies that do focus on the platform are preoccupied with the recommendation algorithm. Schellewald (2021) and Zulli and Zulli (2020), for example, demonstrate that replicability, imitability, and relatability all increase a videos likelihood of being promoted by the platform's algorithm. While their research is useful to identify why ideological echo-chambers and 'rabbit holes' occur on the platform, it does little to explore how the implications of this in regard to the cross-pollination of ideological communities on TikTok.

The work of Vijay and Gekker (2021) takes some steps to remedy this gap in the literature by exploring how politics is performed on, and shaped by, the platform in India. Their work demonstrates an awareness of the political implications of the app, albeit through this algorithmic lens. The few who have undertaken preliminary research on how the radical right have used the platform to share their ideologies largely focus on mainstream organised political parties. Albertazzi and Bonansinga (2023) explore how the accounts of Marine Le Pen of National Rally in France and Vox Spain utilise positive and negative messaging to spread their ideology on the platform. Therefore, while there are academics working within the field of right-wing politics on TikTok, few engage with the role individuals play in spreading extreme ideologies. This should be addressed as there are observed nuances to the platform that content creators take advantage of, appealing to characteristics or feelings within a certain community to be promoted beyond their normal audience.

3.2 Defining the Far-Right

Regardless of their relationship with the internet and social media however, academic work that seeks to explore the far and extreme right is plentiful. Most academics start their engagement by grappling with the challenge of defining the far-right (eg. Koehler, 2017). The work of Cas Mudde (2005, 2007, 2016) provides a fundamental cornerstone to the field, pioneering an understanding of the far-right as groups that 'promote the 'populist articulation of nativism, opposition to immigration and an authoritarianism of

strong law and order' (Mudde in Worth, 2021: 502). Mudde's work enables some key characteristics of the far-right to be understood. Namely:

- Populism: understood as a 'thin-centred ideology' 'that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people' (Mudde, 2005: 543).

- Nativism: the belief that the 'native group should solely inhabit the state' and any 'non-native' elements are deemed threatening to the homogeneity of the nation-state' (Mudde, 2007: 14).

- Authoritarianism: the belief that society needs to be strictly ordered and that infringements on the law should be strictly punished (Spierings et al., 2015: 8).

Mudde's definition provides criteria against which a group's ideologies can be measured, foregrounding the vital importance of 'othering' and 'us vs them' narratives in the construction of identity within these groups. His 'themes' outline clear values that allows any content to be quickly identified as belonging to the 'far-right'. Work such as Cremer's (2023) investigation into Trumpism and the populist radical right, and Marcos-Marne, Plaza-Colodro and O'Flynn's (2021) case study on Vox, demonstrates that analytical value can be found in utilising Mudde's definition as an evaluation tool. His work serves to identify the baseline against which all subsequent sub-groups of the far-right are measured - identifying a common, linking ideology that spans throughout.

Bjørgo and Ravndal (2019) situate the extreme right as an extension of Mudde's definition of the far-right. They pose that while all far-right groups have the three characteristics previously identified, the extreme right separate themselves from other, more moderate factions through an unwillingness to work within the democratic framework to remove the liberal elites. Instead of seeking to influence change through participating in government and political movements, extreme right groups will disavow democracy and cite a willingness 'to use violence and other non-conventional means', to achieve the

desired results (Bjørgo and Ravndal, 2019: 2). They express a deep distrust at a corrupt and flawed political system and support the use of violence, or radical action, to create a new system. As such, this thesis progresses with the understanding that the far-right is a spectrum, unified by a similar underlying ideology of nativism, populism and authoritarianism. The extreme right exists as a sub-category, characterised by rejection of democratic process and support of radical change.

The work of Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2021) similarly supports the decision to engage with the extreme right as an ideologically similar but conceptually separate entity from the far-right. Miller-Idriss uses Mudde's key characteristics as a base for her analysis but offers a more context-specific consideration of the defining traits of these groups. She argues that the spectrum of the far-right is unified by one of four elements: 'exclusionary and dehumanizing beliefs, anti-government and antidemocratic practices and ideals, existential threats and conspiracy theories, and apocalyptic fantasies' (Miller-Idriss, 2021). While traces of Mudde's populism, nativism and authoritarianism can still be identified, Miller-Idriss links the far-right to more specific beliefs largely brought about through social media and the internet.

Interestingly, Miller-Idriss argues that members of the extreme right distinguish themselves from less extreme right-wing organisations through stronger prejudice towards an out-group, rather than expressing stronger anti-democratic values. She emphasises the importance of individual experiences of insecurity to build an imminent sense of threat within these groups. She states that the success of the organisation is often implicitly 'tied to the idea of an existential threat to the dominant group and then linked to emotional appeals to protect, defend, and take heroic action to restore [the 'natural' order]' (ibid). The groups rely on individual constructions of insecurity and security to lend a potency to their ideology. The work of Miller-Idriss is important to this thesis in two regards: firstly, her work, alongside that of the others mentioned above, helps establish identifiable characteristics of the extreme right and clearly demonstrates how inter-connected the sub-categories are. Secondly, Miller-Idriss's work emphasises the important role that personal perceptions of security

and insecurity plays in the creation, and success, of far-right and extreme right narratives. Her analysis leaves room for an exploration of the manifestation of these characteristics at an individual level to understand how an individual's perception and experience of security may serve to strengthen the appeal of these ideologies.

3.3 Misogyny and the Manosphere

Many scholars argue that regardless of severity of beliefs, the far-right and the extreme right is an inherently gendered space. The work of Ebner and Davey (2019) and Mattheis (2018), for example, look at the gendered dynamics within the right wing itself, exploring the roles that males and females adopt within the organisations. Others, such as Grant and Macdonald (2020), focus on the use of gendered ideology in the mobilisation or motivation of far-right event. They argue that the Toronto 'incel' attack in 2018 and Donald Trump's US presidential success in 2016 are indicative of the dangerous role that the characteristics and narratives surrounding hegemonic masculinity play in the mobilisation of the extreme right. They argue that the overlap between the ideologies creates an emotionally charged rhetoric that is entwined with violence and revenge. The work of Mudde (2018) aligns with this approach, highlighting that traditional machismo and social hierarchies within the 'Unite the Right' movement demonstrates the mobilising effect gendered rhetoric can lend right-wing propaganda. Both examples ground their analysis in recent events and actions that have threatened the democratic process. Caron Gentry explores this further through the frame of misogyny, arguing that 'there would be no far-right terrorism without misogyny', defining it as 'the policing force that upholds patriarchy, ensuring that (particular) women and girls conform to the normative order' (Gentry, 2022: 209). There is clear argument in existing academic studies that demonstrates that gendered ideas of misogyny and masculinity have become a unifying motivating narrative that may escalate into violent action.

Fundamental to the success of these narratives is the belief that modern, progressive culture produces 'weak men', and that that white men that display hegemonic masculinity are 'in danger of losing their proper economic, political

and social place to undeserving white women and to non-white men and women' (Blee, 2002: 113). In other words, social change is threatening the hegemonic norm. From interviews with former members of extreme right groups, Kimmel observes that the weaponisation of masculinity in response to these claims takes one of three forms:

1. Threatened masculinity to describe a personal situation: ie. 'You are single or unemployed because 'others' took your job/ girlfriend'.
2. Threatened masculinity to problematise the 'other': ie they are too effeminate or too animalistic.
3. Threatened masculinity to recruit: ie come join us and reclaim your masculinity, your job and your girlfriend by fighting the 'other'. (Summarised from Kimmel, 2017 and Mudde, 2018)

These three approaches outlined all rely on the idea of a 'crisis of masculinity': the idea that social, economic and political change has resulted in the demonisation and targeting of hegemonically masculine traits (Nilan, Roose, Peucker and Turner, 2023: 287). While this narrative pre-dates the movement, it does provide an emotive ideological backbone from which the right-wing groups can mobilise. Kimmel's observations clearly demonstrate the role that narratives and assumptions based in hegemonic masculinity play in themes of security and insecurity within these groups.

Perhaps what makes the identification of hegemonic masculinity within the motivational ideologies of the right so concerning is their overlap with specific misogynistic online communities. As the Anti-Defamation League argues

> while not all misogynists are racists, and not every white supremacist is a misogynist, a deep-seated loathing of women acts as a connective tissue between many white supremacists, especially those in the alt-right, and their lesser-known brothers in hate like incels (involuntary celibates), MRAs (Men's Rights Activists) and PUAs (Pick Up Artists). […] After all, it's not a huge leap from "women's quest for equal rights threatens my stature as a man" to "'minorities' and women's quests for equal rights threaten my stature as a white man." (ADL, 2018: 5)

While misogynistic ideology does not immediately indicate participation in extreme right ideologies or violence, the considerable overlap between the communities increases the likelihood of vulnerable individuals becoming exposed to new and radicalising ideas and narratives: misogyny becomes a 'gateway drug' to other extreme and violent ideologies (DiBranco, 2020). Indeed, while Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro (2020) struggle to account for misogyny motivated attacks under the definition of terrorism, they do emphasise the presence of a core ideology of 'subjugation and repression of a group'. This strongly overlaps with right-wing ideas and can lead to escalated hate crime with ' far-reaching societal effects'. They also note, with some concern, that online misogynistic communities are 'seamlessly' integrating into a violent extreme right 'tapestry' due to the shared ideology and 'grievances' (2020:572). The work of Hoffman, Ware and Shapiro clearly demonstrates the ideological bridge that misogyny provides within the extremist space and raises clear concern for cross-pollination within this sphere.

However, while other manifestations of far-right politics are engaged with as reasonably organised collectives, there is little to suggest that the alt-right shares this trait. The alt-right 'incorporates individuals from the 'Manosphere', anti-progressives from the #GamerGate movement, 4chan trolls, far-right conservatives, racists and conspiracy theorists' (Lumsden and Harmer, 2019: 8), all linked by a backbone of populism, nativism and misogyny. The Manosphere, as part of the far-right spectrum, is of particular interest to this thesis. It is understood as an umbrella term that combines many 'online antifeminist subcultures' such as the Pick Up Artists (PUAs), Men's Rights Activists (MRAs), Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), and Involuntary Celibates (Incels), with each group having their own characterising attitudes towards women and democratic structures (See figure 1 for further detail). The close overlap between the Manosphere and other right wing groups

The similarities between the two movements can result in 'cross pollination' as the 'outrage' of the men's rights arena acts as a bridge to other extreme ideologies.

Sub Culture	Description
Pick Up Artists	Pick-up Artists similarly believe they are entitled to sex and women therefore need to be sexually available. These online communities teach their members how to manipulate women into sex.
Men's Rights Activists	Men's rights activists believe men are disadvantaged by feminism. Unlike the other sub-cultures, men's rights activists attempt to formalise their narratives by framing it in academic terms, therefore claiming legitimacy. Instead of focusing on sex, they claim that 'gender equality, women's rights, and women's status in society more broadly' is a threat to men.
MGTOW	The Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) community aim to live their lives with little to no contact with women. They believe that women are essentially parasites that ride on the coat tails of men and can ruin men's lives if they choose to. Therefore, they believe the sensible decision is to have as little contact with them as possible.

While perhaps ridiculous, the MGTOW policy of avoidance has had far reaching effects: Vice President Mike Pence announced he would not eat a meal with a woman alone who was not his wife for fear of accusations of misconduct. |
| Incels | Short for Involuntarily Celibate, incels believe they are entitled to sex and that women are at fault when they do not get it. As a result, they may feel a hatred towards women. The online incel community is rife with misogyny varying from 'broader generalisations to pro-rape discourse'.

The incel community is considered the most dangerous of the Manosphere, as their ideology is evident in recent terror attacks by individuals such as Elliot Rodgers. |

Figure 1: Table depicting the sub-cultures of the Manosphere, gathered from Institute of Strategic Dialogue, 2022 and Bates, 2020.

Literature exploring the Manosphere communities largely takes the format of a deep immersion into the source material, drawing 'from a tradition of diverse concepts, such as techno-sociological theories (e.g. toxic disinhibition) and views on patriarchal societal constructs'(Ribeiro et al, 2021: 196). Many focus on the language of the Manosphere, particularly examining the use and context of 'the matrix' and 'red-pill' terminology. The work of Shawn P Van Valken (2021) demonstrates that the terminology of 'the matrix' and 'red-pill', borrowed from the 1999 film *The Matrix,* fills a foundational role within this community (2021: 87). The central plot of the film relies on the premise of 'the matrix': 'a virtual reality which convinces human beings that they are living free lives, hiding the cruel truth that most people exist entirely within Gigeresque pods that drain them of their life force' (ibid: 87). Importantly, individuals have the ability to see through the illusions of the matrix and become aware of their own captivity. As Ging (2017) observes, both the characters in *The Matrix* and members of the alt-right/Manosphere are 'given the choice of taking one of the two pills. Taking the blue pill means switching off and living a life of delusion; taking the red pill means becoming enlightened to life's ugly truths' (2017: 3). Many academics express concern of the growing popularity of this nomenclature, both within the Manosphere itself, and within the lexicon of the general public. As such, there is an accepted language that can be identified as belonging to the Manosphere and a growing body of research that tracks the use of this language across social media platforms.

3.4 Moving Away From a Consumer Focus

Research that focuses on hegemonic masculinity, extreme misogyny and the Manosphere across social media tends to align with one of three, user focused approaches (Bujalka, Bender and Rich, 2022: 1):

1. Focusing on the online dissemination of anti-feminist discourse and 'categories of masculinity'(ie Chang, 2022).

2. Speculating on the extent to which the content and the individuals that identify with it can be considered a threat to security and democratic society (ie Bates, 2021).

3. Examining the role and responsibility that social media platforms such as Facebook and Youtube have in the proliferation and the monitoring of this content (ie Papadamou, 2021).

While the work that falls into these three categories are often pertinent examples of insightful research into how the language of Manosphere manifests, the current consumer focus of academia neglects to consider the role that content producers play in constructing narratives of security and insecurity within these communities of individuals.

Noting this trend within the literature, Bujalka, Bender and Rich (2022) take steps to remedy this neglect and at the time of writing, serve as one of the only identified examples of academic research that concentrates exclusively on Manosphere influencers. Centring their research on Youtube, they investigate how writer Rollo Tomassi and Men's Right Activist Elliot 'construct a perception of threat in their audience while simultaneously positioning themselves to provide a solution to this same threat' (ibid: 1). In grounding their work in identity racketeering theory and directly applying it to the Manosphere, Bujalka, Bender and Rich demonstrate a clear relationship between influencer and securitizing narratives on social media platforms, suggesting a deliberate effort to monopolise on feelings of insecurity and security within their audience (see figure 4). Labelling these individuals as 'thought leaders', they note the social value found in constructing a sense of 'sense of catastrophe' and insecurity around threatened masculinity' (ibid; 1-3).
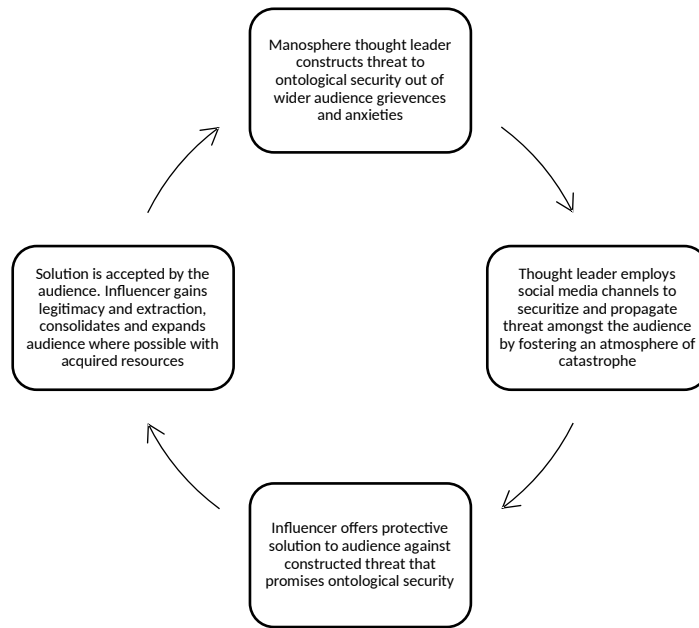
Figure 4: Diagram depicting the relationship between security and thought leader, replicated from Bujalka, Bender and Rich (2022: 10).

Bujalka, Bender and Rich's work is shaped by a lens of ontological security, identifying that key features of the Manosphere, such as anti-feminist narratives and 'crisis masculinity', come from a perception that the world has become 'unknowable' and incomprehensible to most men. As such, the Manosphere serves to rescue these 'insecure' identities by providing a way for men to understand the 'everyday lived crises they experience' (ibid: 4-6).

Accordingly, Bujalka, Bender and Rich argue that the Youtube content produced by these thought leaders can be split into two categories: narratives promoting insecurity and narratives that offer security. The first relies on the established binary common to the red pill: the enlightened audience versus ignorant. Thought leaders demonstrate the unfair state of the world around them the individual through language steeped in Red Pill ideology such as women are naturally hypergamous and that many democratic structures – such as the legal system and media – are set up against them. The second category of content demonstrates that you can regain security by understanding the realities of the world around you, discarding the 'blue pill' brainwashing that keeps you in existential peril to begin with. Here, Bujalka, Bender and Rich note a fascination

with the entrepreneurial, of 'being one's own boss, taking control of one's life, and making wise financial and relationship decisions' (ibid: 7). They point to the success of Richard Cooper, a Youtuber who claims to unplug 'men from comforting lies, with cold, hard, uncomfortable truths about life & women (Twitter, 2023) as evidence of this. His content appeals to those who feel abandoned by society, offering them legitimacy and a new 'entrepreneurial' identity to better themselves. Similarly, there is preoccupation with physical wellness alongside this drive for mental resilience; fitness Youtube Elliot Hulse claims his fitness programme will help 'Make Men Strong Again' and 'command the respect of women' (Hulse, 2019). Bujalka, Bender and Rich clearly demonstrate patterns of ontological security and insecurity within the Manosphere on social media and outline the role of the influential individual in constructing these narratives. Their study outlines key themes by which this manifests such as societal failings and entrepreneurialism.

There can be no denying that Bujalka, Bender and Rich's work provides a cornerstone to the understanding of the relationship between experiences of security and Manosphere within the context of this thesis. Their approach and key themes inspired the application of ontological security theory and the categorisation moving forward. However, Bujalka, Bender and Rich limit their consideration of thought leaders within this realm to Youtubers. While this focus is understandable, as Youtube is by far the largest host of user generated video content in the world (Papadamou, 2021: 412), their analysis cannot be expanded to consider the actions of influencers on other platforms. Additionally, Bujalka, Bender and Rich fail to account for the role of 'modernity' within the success of these narratives, therefore neglecting to consider a large driver of ontological insecurity.

This thesis aims to build on the work of Bujalka, Bender and Rich and other influential academics within the realm of extreme-right studies and social media, misogyny and the Manosphere. A focused literature review demonstrates that while there is academic precedent to explore the manifestation of misogyny and extreme right ideologies through social media, TikTok remains an understudied platform in this regard. However, the existing academic work can

be used to support new efforts. The work of Mudde, alongside that of Bjørgo and Ravndal and Miller-Idriss allow clear characteristics of the far-right and extreme right to be identified. The suitability of these frameworks to the study of the Manosphere is justified through the observed overlaps between misogynistic online communities and the far right. Despite the trend of focusing on the manifestation of these ideologies within the user base of social media platforms, Bujalka, Bender and Rich demonstrate that there is analytical value that can be found in analysing influencers within the Manosphere instead. While their work is important, the limited scope of their study has resulted in an absence of academic discussion about influencers on other social media platforms. This thesis aims to go some way to filling that gap. In focusing on such a well-known individual such as Andrew Tate within the realm of TikTok, this thesis seeks to establish the importance of influential individuals in the proliferation and normalisation of extreme content. Secondly, this thesis seeks to expand on Bujalka, Bender and Rich's use of ontological security to account for the role that modernisation and securitization have within the analytical process. This will be conceptualised further in the following section.

4. Theoretical Framework

As proposed in the introduction and contextualised through the literature review, this thesis investigates the themes present in TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate through an ontological security lens. Therefore, this section will provide a theoretical base for engagement. Firstly, the fundamental assumption that the state is the referent object of security, and that physical survival should be prioritised, will be challenged and the concept of ontological (in)security will be introduced. Subsequently, the securitization of subjectivity will then be explored. Finally, I will argue why this theoretical framework is suited to exploring themes relating to hegemonic masculinity and the far right within this thesis.

4.1 Refocusing Security: A More Social Approach

Security is a somewhat elusive term, commonly understood through the grand realist concepts of the state, anarchy and military (Ejdus, 2018: 883). Born of power politics, inter-state relations and war, traditional engagements with security place the state as the referent object and prioritise physical survival above any and all domestic concerns, be they economic, political or cultural (McSweeny, 1999: 153). Such models of security make sense when the state is in direct conflict, where physical survival is 'empirically the most pervasive and common concern' (Croft, 2012: 26). However, the usefulness of such 'black box' approaches to security are questionable when considering the relative peace that characterises the Western political arena. As Bill McSweeney argues:

> In a sense, of course, our physical survival is the bottom line. A car bomb or a Russian missile can destroy the fabric of our lives more comprehensively than a fall in share prices, an unwanted pregnancy, a street mugging, or any of the countless lesser threats which visit us on a regular basis. If a street mugging worries us, the realist story implies, how much more will an ICBM *(an intercontinental ballistic missile)* twenty minutes after launch from its base. The logic is unassailable. The problem is that ICBM threats do not visit us on a regular basis. Most of us do not live our lives in the terror of the London blitz, but in the presence

of the network of risk attendant on ordinary everyday life in an urban setting (ibid: 153) [*author's note*].

The importance of physical survival is not questioned: it is the circumstance required in order to achieve anything else and, therefore, the logical priority. Yet, if the primary experiences of security are not direct threats to physical safety but a more personal threat, then it could be considered 'paranoid' to conceptualise the term solely within this frame (ibid: 153). McSweeney draws attention to a more personable, everyday and individual experience of security to demonstrate the validity of his argument; while most of Western society does not live in direct fear for their continual survival, they do experience security and insecurity in a way that is not accounted for in the traditional state-centric, survival focused conceptualisations of the term.

Questioning the logic in prioritising state survival over individual experience in this manner aligns with Kenneth Booth's (1991) concept of Human Security. Noting that state security often does not result in the security of its populace, Booth poses that the individual should be considered the referent object of security (Shani, 2017: 278). This call to refocus security is centred around three interconnected points: firstly, many individuals find themselves at threat from their state rather than protected by it and some states will go so far as to jeopardise their citizens' security in order to ensure their own (Booth, 1991: 320). Framing security at the state level does not give space to consider the experiences of the individual. Secondly, states rarely ensure the security of their populace out of duty and loyalty but instead see it as 'a means to an end, not the end itself' (Bilgan, 2003: 208). The long-term systemic cultural, or social issues that may trigger internal, individual experiences of insecurity are rarely considered or addressed within traditional conceptualisations. Finally, approaches that treat the state as the referent object expect a state homogeneity that does not exist on the international stage, therefore the comprehensiveness of the resulting conceptualisations of security must be questioned. In short, the state-centric, survival-focused models of security harken back to a time where a state's main threat was another state. It does not allow the varying, more social, experiences of security *within* state borders to be considered, thereby glossing

over a range of insecurity (ibid: 208). While Booth's approach has not been without critique, namely that it promotes a 'shopping list' approach to security that loses all utility to policymakers (Newman, 2010: 82), it does demonstrate a need to consider more personable and social experiences when considering insecurity caused by non-traditional threats such as the internet.

4.2 Ontological Insecurity and Globalisation

The call for a more social, everyday conceptualisation of security is made by several sources. Most notably, psychoanalyst R. D Laing focuses on the relationship between identity, narrative and security in his work *The Divided Self* (1960). He introduces the concept of ontological security in an attempt to answer this call, understanding it as security of the self: a state where an individual experiences

> his own being as real, alive, whole; as differentiated from the rest of the world in ordinary circumstances so clearly that his identity and autonomy are never in question; as a continuum in time; as having an inner consistency, substantiality, genuineness, and worth; as spatially coextensive with the body; and, usually, as having begun in or around birth and liable to extinction with death' (ibid: 43).

The ontologically secure individual navigates the world around them with ease. Although they may encounter all the 'hazards of life', be they 'social, ethical, spiritual, biological' or political, a firm sense of their 'own and other people's reality and identity' protects them from feeling insecure or threatened by these dangers (ibid: 39). The secure individual thrives from everyday interactions that affirm their place in the world as they understand it. They are confident that 'the story (the discourse) being told is a good one' and that it 'rests on solid' ground (Kinnvall, 2004: 746). Solid ground, in this case, is found from a firm and coherent sense of the world and is dependent on trust in the emotional and cognitive 'anchorings' of reality (Laing, 1960: 38). This trust is developed from infancy and dependent on the predictable caregiving routines of parental figure (McSweeney, 1999: 155). It forms a 'protective cocoon' that shields the individual from any potential physical or psychological threats to their security

as they progress to adulthood, filtering reality to enable daily life (Giddens, 1991: 38).

If ontological security relies on an individual's basic trust in the fundamental assumptions of the world, then ontological *insecurity* is the result of the 'coherence' and 'continuity' of these assumptions being challenged. That basic trust that sheltered them is lost, and the result is anxiety. Anxiety, here, is different to fear. If fear can be characterised as 'a response to a specific threat' to security and is more often associated with physical survival, then anxiety can be understood as a more 'free-floating' generalised reaction that threatens the individual's self-identity and world view (ibid: 42-43). For example, while an individual who fears death will focus on the event itself, and the method which they might meet their end; they can take preventative measures to protect themselves, such as exercise or wearing a seatbelt. In contrast, anxiety about dying stems from the absolute unknown after death, and the prospect of non-being (Tillich in Rumelili, 2015: 12). Anxiety cannot be so easily remedied; individuals must take steps to channel their anxieties into fears, as only then can it be addressed, and ontological security reclaimed.

Applications of ontological security within security studies rely on the work of Anthony Giddens (1991). To Giddens, ontological security is a state that comes from knowing the answers to fundamental questions concerning existence, 'finitude', 'human life', 'the experience of others' and the 'continuity of self-identity' (Ejdus, 2018: 886). These questions relate to existence itself, the individual's position in relation to the world around them, the role of other people within the world (subjectivity gained through intersubjectivity) and identity (Giddens, 1991: 47-52). Giddens scales ontological security up to the societal level, creating a framework in which security is the product and result of multiple referent objects interacting and affecting each other's security through socialisation. His interpretation explicitly links the actions of the individual to the broader community, and vice versa. Security no longer becomes a binary state experience but instead a dynamic relationship where 'potential referents interact and affect each other's security (Shaw in Bilgan, 2003: 209): the actions of one can impact the security of others. Therefore,

security is formed not only through the structural institutions that the individual identifies with, but their social environment too. Similarly, insecurity does not just come from physical threat, but also more ideological or emotive changes too.

Giddens, and later Kinnvall (2004), argue that increased feelings of ontological insecurity within the population is a symptom of the modern world. To Giddens, modernity is deeply linked to industrialism, capitalism and mass communication (ibid: 14-15): widespread rapid change to society and social relations. Kinnvall, perhaps more simply describes this as the process of globalisation (Kinnvall, 2004: 742). Both agree that the formation of modern society has resulted in a huge number of economic, political and social changes in a very short period of time. Societies are now more interconnected than ever before with an 'increased movement of goods, services, technology, borders, ideas, and people' (ibid: 743). This has resulted in a widespread feeling of rootlessness as 'people experience the effects of capitalist development, media overflow, structural adjustment policies, privatization, urbanization, unemployment, forced migration, and other similar transformative forces' (ibid: 743). As society adapts and changes, the hierarchical structures that provided support for, and legitimacy to, traditional identity formation become democratized. The 'old way' of doing things is challenged and key ties that formed identities disintegrate. Kinnvall argues that the world now feels smaller as time and space have become de-territorialised; the effects of globalisation trigger fears of 'losing work, status, or other privileges' (ibid: 742). As a result, the ontologically insecure individual may directly link their perceived loss of security to changes promoted by this process of modernity and lament the sense of security that traditional structures or settings provided (Giddens, 1991: 33). Perhaps then, a natural reaction is to attempt to reclaim this security through the securitization of such influences and to 'de-modernise', returning to a time where society and identity markers were 'stable' and secure.

3.3 Securization, Fantasy and Identity

Key to the reclamation of ontological security is the concept of 'securitization of subjectivity' which 'refers to attempts made to intensify the search for one stable identity in order to reduce ontological insecurity and existential anxiety' (Rumelili in Merino et al., 2020: 79). An individual seeking ontological security will seek to claim certain characteristics and juxtapose them to those of an 'outgroup' to reaffirm their understanding of the world. Applying the securitization of subjectivity to ontological security theory moves away from Giddens' understanding of identity as 'security of being' towards an understanding of identity as 'security of becoming' (Merino et al., 2020: 79). Identity exists here as fluid state: individuals constantly shift between a personal and a communal identity depending on the situation. While they may be comfortable in their own identity, they are more likely to identify with a group identity in conditions where group membership maximises 'similarities between oneself and other group members at the same time as it increases the dissimilarities with other groups' (Kinvall, 2004: 750). The securitization of subjectivity within ontological security enables an insecure individual to identify and name 'objects of fear', thereby transforming anxiety into a clear identifiable threat which can be endured or addressed (Rumelili, 2015: 14).

The success of this process is reliant on a 'leap in faith' towards an 'imagined secure future that can relieve the individual from their present predicament'(Merino et al., 2020: 79). To Erble, this is imagined future is a fantasy that reduces

> anxiety by showing subjects 'their place' in the world—an apparently whole, stable and complete identity. […] Fantasy is not a veil of 'false consciousness' that prevents us from seeing how things 'really are'. On the contrary, fantasy stabilises our sense of reality in the face of the ultimately uncertain world and our own subjective incompleteness (lack). It is 'the support that gives consistency to what we call 'reality'[…], a filter that makes the world understandable and therefore bearable. (Erble, 2017: 249)

As such, the search for pre-existing and established 'systems of meaning' underpin this process by providing 'stable anchors, such as routines and biological narratives', to support this fantasy. This search is implicitly tied to narrative imaginations of 'a sense of place': narratives that invoke a stable 'mythic past' through the replication of cultural and traditional narratives and offer 'security, stability, and simple answers' to remedy feelings of anxiety and meaninglessness (Kinnvall, 2004: 742). Religion and nationalism are two key, important examples of such justifying ideologies. Entrenched in tradition and history, nationalism and religion offer abstract and monolithic identities to those who may feel insecure and 'rootless'. They claim to provide truth, stability and security based in myths, collective memory and old traditions. Nationalism builds on fantasies of the past, conjuring up images of a country untouched by globalisation and the uncertainty it brought to provide a sense of identity and purpose in the face of ontological insecurity (Merino et al., 2020: 79). It offers a chance to return to an 'imagined past', using 'reconstructed symbols' and cultural references to harken back to a more secure time (Kinnvall, 2004: 744).

4.4 The Application of Ontological (In)Security and Masculinity

The application of ontological (in)security theory within this thesis can be easily justified as an established framework to examine ties between insecurity, masculinity and extremist ideologies (Agius et al, 2020; Merino et al., 2020; Kinnvall, 2017). It allows for the development of Kimmel's theory of aggrieved entitlement, introduced in section 1.2, and investigation of the themes of hegemonic masculinity and insecurity, identified in the literature review, with a singular focus on the individual. Bujalka, Bender and Rich argue that narratives of ontological insecurity and security can be found throughout the alt-right, with a deep sense that the world 'has become disordered, incomprehensible, and 'unknowable' to a majority of men' and that masculinity is in crisis or under threat (2022: 3). Seeing the analytical value in this framework, many academics have utilised this framework in their own investigation of masculinity and the far right: the work of Kinnvall and Mitzen (2017) and Kimmel (2017) clearly demonstrates the insight that can be gained

by considering insecurity and identity when analysing masculine themes and narratives used in within the far-right.

Indeed, it is the implicit link between identity, gender and extreme right discourses that further supports ontological security theory's suitability as a framework within this thesis. The reported 'masculinization' of far-right discourse suggests a considered effort to capitalize on the perceived feelings of victimhood and anxiety among young men to build a sense of belonging and comradeship. Traditional, established depictions of masculinity are valorised and members are encouraged to explore a stable cultural identity through myths, collective narratives and gendered spaces (Scrinzi, 2017: 90). These gendered characteristics expand into portrayals of the 'nation (us) v the other' narrative that underpins the fundamental nativist assumptions: the other being anyone who threatens the traditional order and is often critiqued by attributing explicitly feminine characteristics in contrast to the nation which is constructed through 'hyper-masculine' notions of aggression, assertiveness, and control (Kinvall, 2016: 525). As such, extreme right discourse is intrenched in portraying and preserving 'assumptions about masculinity, femininity, and privilege' deemed threatened by modern practices (Kinvall, 2017: 95). This thesis therefore poses that hegemonic masculinity can also serve as an identity marker, promising truth, stability and security to those who may feel insecure about modern societal change.

Applying ontological security within the framing of this thesis enables the role of identity within securitization and individual security to be examined. In understanding themes of hegemonic masculinity as strategies of the securitization of subjectivity, we can gain a new insight into the narratives of right-wing politics that have found themselves in more mainstream media. Andrew Tate's content can be understood to take advantages of a widespread fear of change in the current hierarchical order and a loss of privilege among some of the male populace and utilise gender insecurities as a lynchpin to build support and promote feelings of both security and insecurity.

5. Methodology

In this section I will discuss the methodological framework that guided this project. Firstly, I will outline the benefits of choosing a single case study model and demonstrate why Andrew Tate is a suitable case study. This will be followed by an outline of the research steps undertaken and an overview of thematic analysis, and its application within this thesis.

5.1 Research Strategy

5.1.1 Suitability of the Research Design

There is clear precedent for the application of a single case study research design when engaging with so-called Manosphere influencers. The work of Bujalka, Bender and Rich (2021) serves as a key example of case studies within this field. Utilising a multi-case study design, their work demonstrates the analytical value that can be found in undertaking focused and in-depth study of influencers within this environment. Additionally, there have been single case study efforts that further demonstrate the value of engaging with the content creators and their online communities; Crociani-Windland and Yates (2020), and Nesbitt-Larking (2022) have produced insightful and thorough analysis centred around controversial Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson. Although their scope and analytical lens is broader than that of this thesis, their work clearly demonstrates the impact and value that a focused case study can lend analysis. Thereby, the decision to follow this research design aligns with current academic practice and promises generalisable and impactful discussion.

While the use of case studies is not a new within this field of study, the decision to focus on Andrew Tate is. Although Tate was a relatively unknown personality before April 2022 (Google Trends, 2023), his subsequent rise to notoriety has resulted in a level of mainstream popularity previously unachieved by other influencers within the Manosphere. While many journalists have linked Tate with the Manosphere, the far right and the rise of extreme online misogyny, their work is largely observational and lacks an empirical base that would offer

additional legitimacy to their claims (see Burgess, 2023; Radford, 2023; Weale, 2023; Fazackerly, 2023). This dearth of primary data extends into academic circles; at the point of writing, no academic effort has been made to engage with Andrew Tate beyond opinion (see Cousineau, 2022). Acknowledging the limitations of current secondary research materials, his case was chosen to further the understanding of 'thought leaders' within this realm, while also finally empirically linking him to these communities.

5.1.2 Limitations

The single case study design is uniquely suited for this project as it enables understanding of socially 'complex phenomena' through holistic and in-depth analysis of a chosen subject (Yin, 2009: 4). Although some have critiqued the case study for its lack of generalisation and narrow focus, these characteristics were deemed a benefit within the context of this thesis: enabling a depth of understanding that 'broader' research methods could not offer within the limited scope and budget available. Additionally, Robert K Yinn's observation that the single case study design is suited to answer 'how' and 'why' research questions – as is the aim of this thesis – further demonstrates the suitability of this methodology moving forward (Ibid: 9-10). The depth and narrow focus afforded by the single case study design helped negate the relative absence of secondary material while still enabling meaningful contribution to the academic field.

It must be noted that the single case study design maintains a contested and somewhat controversial position as a methodology within socio-political study, largely due to its lack of clear definition (Gerring, 2004: 341). The work of methodologists such as Yinn (2009) and Eckstein (1992), for example, serve as notable attempts to provide definitions that present case studies as a valid research method. However, their definitions are largely broad and characteristic driven, focusing on specific approaches to data collection and analysis or key terms and do little to remedy the underlying tension of whether the approach can be understood as a methodology. Yet, solace can be found in the work of John Gerring, whose definition builds on previous efforts and presents the case

study method as ''an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units'; this definition is hinged on the understanding of a unit as 'a spatially bounded phenomenon […] served at a single point in time or over some delimited period' (Gerring, 2004: 342). Thus, the single case study design can be understood as a single in-depth study of one case from which generalities can be drawn. This interpretation, and Gerring's definition, provides a fundamental cornerstone to the understanding of the single case study as a methodology within this thesis and guides its application moving forward.

5.2 Research Steps

5.2.1 Data Collection

Video content featuring Tate can be found across most mainstream (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok) and alternative social media platforms despite often breaching community guidelines. The richness of data available on the video sharing app Tiktok, as well as its widespread cultural impact and the increasing concern about the danger of extreme content on the app (Kanthawala et al., 2022: 3105), made the platform the most suitable candidate for data extraction. With 69% of its 800 million monthly users under the age of 24 and an algorithm driven engagement model that promotes content through a 'for you' page rather than relying on a search function, content on TikTok has huge impact shaping the cultural and social lives of the younger generations (Literat, 2021: 3). Although research building on TikTok content is still in its 'nascent stage' and somewhat limited by the restrictions on the social media platform's operating systems (ibid: 3105), efforts such as that by Foster and Baker (2022) demonstrate that meaningful research into the construction of identity on the platform is achievable. Although their work focuses on the aesthetic manifestations of hybrid masculinity, their ability to collect, filter, code and analyse TikTok videos exemplifies the analytical potential that TikTok has.

Although precedent has been set for data collection concerned with social media influencers on TikTok (see Pretorius, McCashin and Coyle, 2022

for example), data collection efforts within this thesis could not follow similar influencer-led projects and utilise Tate's personal account due to a co-ordinated de-platforming effort in August 2022 (Sung, 2022). However, the continual proliferation of his content on Tiktok and other platforms is owed to an alternative content distribution method that relies on fans distributing videos through a number of separate accounts. As Tate elaborated on a podcast interview prior to his ban from Twitter and Instagram:

[Host] […] You have people make the accounts for you essentially, right?

[T] There are thousands and thousands of new videos of me on TikTok per day, and I don't have a TikTok account.

[Host] OK, so if you're sitting on a plane filming, presumably yourself, how does that go from that phone to TikTok?

[T] I'll put it on Twitter or I'll put on an Instagram story, and then people will grasp it and they'll grab hold of it and then they will digest it and edit it up and put their own spin on it and then it will end up out there in the metaverse. (Appendix 1: 22)

To account for this unorthodox content distribution method, the hashtag search function was utilised as a methodological tool for data selection – a common research method within social media research (eg Literat, 2021). TikTok does not allow for its videos to be filtered to the user requirements and instead organises them through a popularity algorithm (Kanthawala et al, 2022: 3109). While there are noted issues with replicability with this type of algorithm-dictated data collection (ibid: 3109), it is also the closest way to mimic user experience on the app. Researcher observation identified the most popular hashtags associated with content featuring Andrew Tate (see figure 2), and the first and second most popular hashtag, #andrewtate and #tate were chosen for sampling.

Hashtag	Hits
#Andrewtate	22.8 Billion
#Tate	12 Billion
#Hustlersuniversity	4.8 Billion
#HU	2.4 Billion
#HU2	302.9 Million
#AndrewTate (*fire and star emoji*)	50 Million
#AndrwTate	39.5 Million
#TopG	4.5 Million
Total	**42. 4 Billion**

Figure 2: Popular Hashtags as of March 2023, based on research findings.

5.2.2 Sampling and Selection

Data sources were restricted to videos that featured Andrew Tate talking in an interview or directly addressing the camera to limit the impact of any second-hand alterations and ensure consistency across the sampling period. This also ensured that all clips were in English and had clear audio for transcription. Any 'montage' style clips, voice-overs, 'duets' or separate individuals voicing opinions or thoughts on Andrew Tate were disregarded to further reduce the likelihood of misrepresentation or editing within the dataset. Any replicated videos were discounted, as were videos where Tate spoke for less than 10 seconds.

After consultation with the School Ethics Lead, ethical approval was deemed unnecessary on the grounds that Andrew Tate is a 'public figure' and the data collected only concerned him. That being said, the ethical concerns raised by Kanthawala et al. (2022) about current data collection practices on the platform were still considered and shaped the data collection methods and exclusion criteria; any individual interviewing Tate was anonymised and comments on the videos were excluded from data collection due to the minor status of a majority of the platform's users and a lack of informed consent. The decision to only collect videos that visually featured Tate was made with these

ethical concerns in mind too, especially given the prevalence of videos of young men working out with 'motivational' audios of Andrew Tate playing overtop.

Importantly, in light of the criminal allegations, and upcoming trial, currently against Tate, any videos that directly referenced his arrest, used imagery featuring Tate with law enforcement or used the hashtag #freetate were discarded to avoid engaging with an ongoing investigation. As an ethical disclaimer, Andrew Tate was not contacted or interviewed during this research.

Videos were gathered between March and April 2023. A new Samsung tablet device was used, and a new TikTok account was set up under a new email address to mitigate any pre-existing algorithmic preferences, a common practice in TikTok based studies (ibid: 3110). Given that TikTok focused studies completed by Krutrok (2021), and Basch et al. (2021) dictate a sample size of 100 videos, data collection continued until a corpus of 100 videos was reached. Each hashtag was engaged with until 50 consecutive videos did not meet the selection criteria or until the sample size was met. Suitable videos were saved and transcribed verbatim. This produced 100 videos out of 921 viewed (figure 3) producing 1hr 23mins of footage and 22,096 words. Access to these transcripts is made available in Appendix 2.
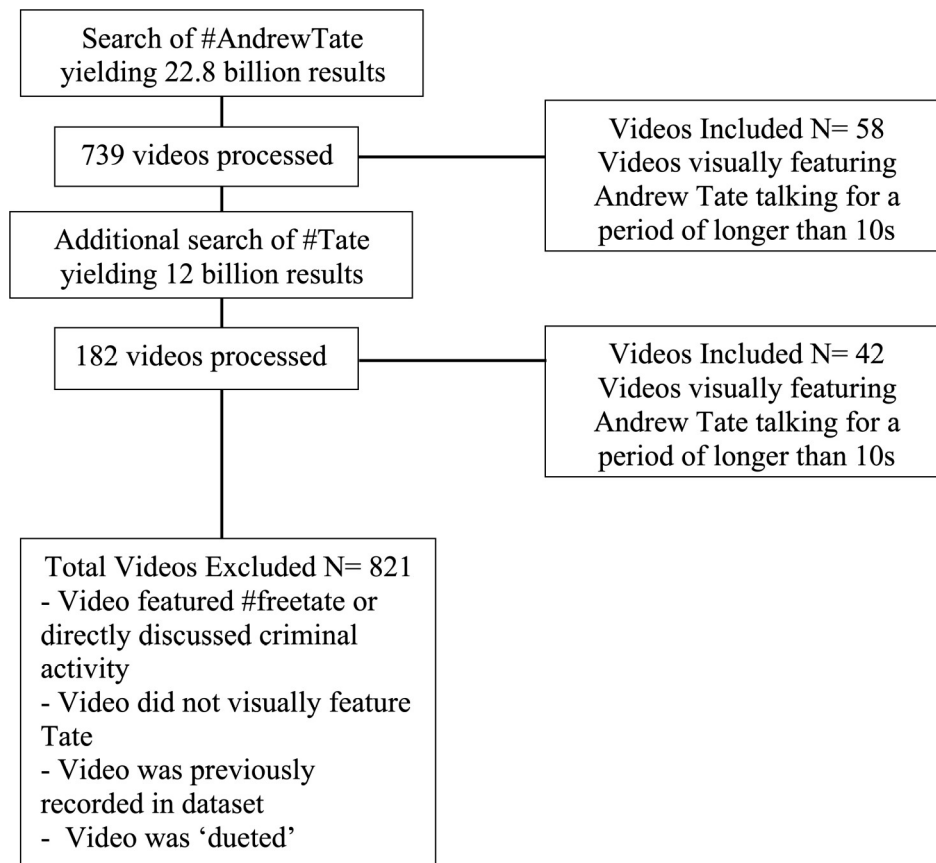
Figure 3: Flowchart depicting the data selection process

5.2.3 Data Interpretation

The transcribed text was interpreted through both quantitative and qualitative methods, aided by the data processing software NVIVO 12 and the analytical framework of thematic analysis.

NVIVO 12 was utilised to produce word frequency tables. Afterall, recurring words can help identify repetitive themes across the data set: as the word frequency table made available in Appendix I demonstrates, the predominant use of the word 'man'/'men' (158), 'money' (75) and 'fuck' (87) indicates potential themes of masculinity, wealth and sexual prowess. While word frequency tables do not play a central role in thematic analysis, it is important to note that they can be used to support insight gained from the literature review and the coding process (Chaiechi and Eijdenberg, 2022: 85). This quantitative exercise helped guide thematic analysis and coding, aiding

with the inductive and deductive process to ensure a holistic research technique as promoted by single case study design.

5.3 Analytical Framework

This thesis was concerned with identifying the prominent themes within Andrew Tate related TikTok content and how they interact with more extreme ideologies. The most appropriate analytical framework identified to complete this task was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis' ability to encourage analytical engagement 'beyond the semantic content of the data […] to identify the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations – and ideologies' made it especially suited to apply to an under-engaged field by encouraging both inductive and deductive coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 84).

Although it is often presented as the 'foundational method for qualitative analysis' (ibid: 386), the broad range of approaches to thematic analysis have resulted in it being critiqued as a 'tool' to be used across different methods rather than a methodology in itself (Boyatzis,1998: 6). Antaki et al. take this critique one step further, arguing that the lack of clear structure to thematic analysis promotes an 'anything goes' approach to research (2003: 7). The adoption of Braun and Clarke's six-phase model for thematic analysis within this thesis was in direct response to these critiques (2006, 2021). While thematic analysis is often open to interpretation, Braun and Clarke's clear six phases lend a clear methodological structure that does not allow for an 'anything goes' approach to coding and theme identification (Attride-Stirling, 2001: 386). Additionally, in providing explicit methodological steps that must be followed, the six-phase framework offered a clarity of process that enables future comparison and evaluation (ibid: 386): Vallegra and Zurbriggen's (2022) work into hegemonic masculinity and the Red Pill serves as a key example of the benefit of such a clear, structured approach within a single case study project.

Expanding on the clear methodology outlined by their earlier work, Braun and Clarke map out the phases that make up their approach to thematic analysis

in their seminal 2021 text *Thematic Analysis: A practical Guide.* These steps can be understood as:

1. <u>Familiarizing yourself with the data:</u> Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.

2. <u>Generating initial codes:</u> Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code

3. <u>Searching for themes:</u> Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

4. <u>Reviewing Themes:</u> Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

5. <u>Defining and Naming Themes:</u> Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. <u>Producing the report:</u> The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis. (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 67)

This thesis followed these phases systematically; the familiarization process took place during the transcription process of the videos. Each transcript was then read a further 2 times and observational notes were made. Subsequently, the transcripts were coded systematically in order of collection within NVIVO12, and similar codes were grouped into potential themes. This was repeated three times as per the recommendation by Braun and Clarke (2021: 71), with the order of transcripts being changed each time to avoid over-familiarisation. Finally, the themes were definitively named and the process of documenting the findings was completed in the following section.

6. Analysis

This thesis sought to utilise hegemonic masculinity and a framework of ontological insecurity to investigate the key themes within the TikTok content of Andrew Tate and how it may overlap with extreme ideologies of the far-right and Manosphere. This marks the first time that this individual's TikTok presence has been engaged within such a framework, and through the lens of security studies. The depth and detail of these findings was only possible through the use of thematic analysis, which provided a structured and iterative approach that enabled the exploration of the content in an in-depth manner.

This section presents the five key themes of thematic analysis, as presented in figure 5. They are split into two inter-related tiers as originally posed by Bujalka, Bender and Rich (2022). While their work uses the terms 'threat proliferation' and 'threat solution', this thesis uses the categories of insecurity and security to situate the findings firmly within the framework of ontological (in)security. The first tier explores how Andrew Tate utilises established themes of failed governance, supported by a clear us v them divide to create a sense of fear and insecurity with his masculine audience. These themes closely align with Miller-Idris's conceptualisation of the extreme right and demonstrate ontologically insecurity as they are based in threatened social structures and hierarchies. The second tier explores how by presenting as the embodied hegemonic male and drawing on themes of a mythic past, Andrew Tate presents a solution to this threat, promising reclaimed masculinity and power in a manner that aligns with similar Manosphere influencers. These tiers are interrelated as it is only because of the sense of masculine crisis and insecurity, can Tate offer security. Each theme demonstrates a clear overlap with ideologies common to the far-right and the Manosphere – supporting the findings of the background literature that online misogynistic communities share certain narratives and ideologies.
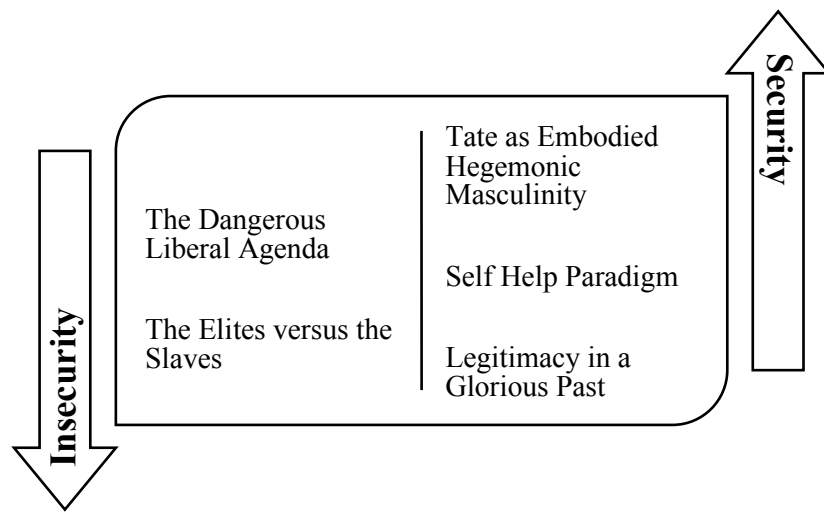
Fig 5: Key themes organised into two tiers, from results

6.1 Threat Proliferation: Creating Insecurity

Analysis completed within the context of this thesis indicates that Andrew Tate's videos maintain a sense of insecurity through the presence of two key themes: anti-government rhetoric and the othering of political elites. The presence of these themes not only aligns with the theoretical construction of ontological insecurity posed earlier, but also supports the findings of the literature review by demonstrating the ideological overlap between narratives within the extreme-right and online misogynistic communities.

6.1.1. Theme 1: A Dangerous Liberal Agenda

The TikTok content engaged with promotes feelings of insecurity by positioning organised democratic government as a direct existential threat to the male general public. Within the videos, Tate espouses anti-government sentiment, arguing that most established democracies are more concerned with supporting 'the matrix' and consolidating power than addressing true security issues. Utilising exaggerated crime statistics, Tate argues that modern approaches to governance cannot ensure the physical safety of their citizens:

> They keep voting for the same stupid stupid things. They refuse to pass hard laws. Crime is going up thousands of percent a year. There's like 30 or 40 stabbings a day and everyone's dying and they are just sitting there going 'Oh well you know maybe if we wait long enough'. Like what's going to happen? (Appendix 2: V6).

To Tate, modern democratic governments are incapable of guaranteeing the security of their citizens as they more concerned with the implementation of liberal values and civil liberties. Furthermore, he suggests that governments are willing to directly sacrifice the security of their citizens to ensure the protection of these values:

> Now I'm risking getting stabbed to pay 60% taxes and then on top of that the police want to give me a fine for not wearing a mask, it's a police state. If I'm going to live in a police state, I want at least to be provided with safety. If I go to Dubai, it's a police state, but it's safe, I can wear a $1,000,000 watch all day long. I know I can't fuck with the law, but at least they've given me my safety. In the West, they're going to they're going to take all your freedom and not provide safety and then want to police your Facebook comments (Appendix 2: V5).

By emphasising a high tax rate alongside the restrictions that governments place on their civilian population, such as the covid mandates, speeding tickets or hate speech restrictions on social media, Tate presents organised government itself as a threat to the physical and financial safety and security of his audience; paying a higher tax rate is harder to justify if you do not feel that those taxes are being used in the right way to begin with. He furthers this narrative by vocally supporting controversial, conservative politicians like Donald Trump, who legitimate his distrust in government structures by espousing similar rhetoric (Appendix 2: V75), and questions the intellectual capabilities of anyone who believes Trump to be an unsuitable presidential candidate (Appendix 2: V70). Additionally, by emphasising that recent changes to the democratic institution, largely associated with liberalisation and democratisation, Tate's videos align with ontological insecurity as constructed Kinnvall (2004): something caused by a previously supportive system being replaced by one in which the individual does not have their previous privileges.

Tate furthers this claim of insecurity from corrupt, poorly prioritised governance through simplistic arguments that present liberation movements such feminism as a tool used by the political elites to subdue men. Many groups

within the alt-right and Manosphere contain narratives of anti-feminism and racism, alongside conspiracy theories; in this respect, the content of Andrew Tate is no different. He argues that

> They keep us divided and distracted. And empowering females is the easiest way to weaken the will of men. When the Romans conquered the Greeks, the first thing they did was kill all the fighting age males. And we live in a world now where they are deliberately killing the fighting age males. They're killing the warrior spirit inside of men. And they're doing that by motivating men. Sorry. Motivating females. And empowering to the point where they're gonna sit there and go. 'You know what? I'm a feminist. You can't tell me what to do. I'm allowed to go out with my friends. He's just my friend. I'm allowed to sleep at his house, drink vodka. Ohh. I only sucked his dick. What's the problem? You know what? Fine. We get a divorce. I'm taking the fucking house.' Yeah, it's bullshit (Appendix 2: V17).

Rather than equality being a sign of progress, Tate paints liberal movements such as feminism as part of the 'psy-op' (Appendix 2: V1): a purposeful and deliberate mission run by political elites to subdue men; after all, how can you 'rebel against the new World order if you don't even feel in charge of your own house?' (Appendix 2: V16). He equates female empowerment and sexual liberation to the purposeful moral corruption of society: stating in another video that '99% of the world's problems would be solved if females walked through life with their [number of sexual partners] on their forehead […] because it would prevent all of the disintegration of morals' (Appendix 2: V1). Given that modernity has been previously identified as a source of ontological insecurity, the framing of female liberation as a threat within this data set cannot come as a surprise. However, Tate takes this one step further: in taking such a strong anti-feminist stance, Tate frames this as an explicitly gendered issue. Hegemonic masculinity dictates heterosexual promiscuity is an inherently masculine trait. Therefore, Tate not only presents female sexual liberation and empowerment as symptom of the morally corrupted present and a threat to the established gender hierarchy, but utilises language that implies a physical danger to the continual dominant existence of men: 'killing the fighting age

males' (Appendix 2: V17). He frames the 'they' (understood as political elites) and feminism as an existential threat to men, thereby establishing an explicit physical threat to security too.

Situating Theme against the Literature Review

Anti-liberal sentiment, such as that expressed by Tate above, has become a hallmark of far-right ideologies. If Mudde's (2005) framework is applied, then this theme aligns with the authoritarian aspect of the far-right as it seeks harsher laws and associates more liberal policies such as equality as a threat to the continued physical safety of citizens (Spierings et al., 2015: 8). However, it must be noted that as Tate does not show any desire to overthrow democracy itself, but only expresses a deep distrust of the current 'liberal' application of it, he does not align with Mudde's extreme- right definitions at this point. Therefore, it may be more useful to situate this theme within the work of Miller-Idriss (2021) as it does occur on the online environment. She considers anti-government rhetoric, framed in terms of an existential threat to the individual, as characteristic of the extreme right. While it can be stated that Tate aligns with extreme right ideologies, he does not promote the radical, or violent change that often accompanies this rhetoric.

If conceptualised within the work of Miller-Idriss, the framing of the sexual liberation of women as a direct physical threat to men, part of a greater government conspiracy, and a physical danger to the longevity of society, further aligns this theme with the extreme right – demonstrating a clear use of othering and existential threat that separates the far-right from the extreme right. This will be explored further in section 6.1.2. However, this theme also aligns with a politicised and fractured portrayal of gender relations that is common within the Manosphere. Lawson (2023) notes that women are often portrayed as a homogenous collective that are all 'vapid, insincere, sexually promiscuous, driven by emotions rather than rationality, motivated by financial gain and more'. Thereby, the presence of this theme within the data set aligns the content of Andrew Tate with one of the most powerful narratives within the Manosphere – that white men are 'are falling prey to feminism, changing social norms, progressive thought and politics' (ADL, 2018).

This theme demonstrates that the content of Andrew Tate on TikTok can intersect with narratives found within the extreme right and the Manosphere to varying degrees.

6.1.2 Theme 2: The Elite v the Slaves

Within the data set, there was a clear use of othering to establish political elites as a continual source of physical and ideological security to the audience. Not only does this align with Rumelili's conceptualisation of the 'us v them' dynamic required of ontological security (Rumelili in Merino et al., 2020: 79), but also mirrors the escalation required by Miller-Idriss to characterise a group as extreme right through the extreme prejudice towards an out-group. Within the data set, Tate successfully frames the government as a fundamental threat to the security and freedom of his audience:

> A government will get slaves, make them work for free. That's slavery. What do they do now? They get people, make them build things for money. But the government print all the money. So if a government can create as much as they want of something from thin air, and you'll give up your life for this thing, they can create from thin air as much as they want, you are still their slave. Slavery's not gone anywhere (Appendix 2: V96).

He presents a rigged system, where the government, and political elites, benefit from the entrenched system and then seek to ensure control of it. This is supported by the identification of a clear 'they' group; an evil cabal of political elites who force this slavery on the general populace and keep people within a system that they benefit from: 'the system is designed to oppress. The people who make the rules did not make the rules for the benefit of us. They make the rules for the benefit of the people who make the rules' (Appendix 2: V5). This serves to establish the current social hierarchy as one that does not serve or protect the individual, but also challenges a fundamental assumption of ontological insecurity, as while Kinnvall poses that changing social structures and beneficiaries can lead to ontological insecurity (2004: 742), Tate is suggesting that what they were providing was never security in the first place.

This theme is developed further by establishing the status of slave and situating the general populace within the state of slavery. Tate implicitly links this status of 'slave' to insecurity, presenting it as a precondition in modern society. He frames this as a largely masculine condition, once again presenting insecurity as an explicitly gendered experience. He argues that the common portrayal of successful masculinity as a good job, wife, kids and a home. In short, the identity markers identified by Giddens (1991) as a source of ontological security, are actually a predetermined path that is meant to trap men within the system:

> And when I talk about the matrix, it primarily applies to men, because men are the backbone of the slave force- we always have been and always will be. And unfortunately now, if you're a law abiding man inside the matrix, your future and the life that is laid out for you is nothing but depressing. You're gonna go to school, you're gonna get in debt, you're gonna get a job, you get wife. Divorce is coming. You're going to lose the house eventually. Your job is shit. Inflation is outpacing your wages. You're going to work, work, work. No one's going to appreciate it. Now you're old and your lifes over. That is the matrix for 99% of men and you need to find a way to escape it (Appendix 2: V5).

Tate situates a large amount of his audience within this 'slave category': note the repetitive use of the word 'you' that enforces the audience's helplessness within the narrative that he paints. Within this world of failed governance and 'modernity', Tate takes an assertive stance, presenting the 'typical' social measurements of success, and societal structures as a fundamental source of physical, emotional, and financial insecurity. The societally accepted portrayal of dutiful manhood is instead as a source of pain and suffering, a tool used by the government who wish to keep you trapped in this status to work for them.

Situating Theme against the Literature Review

Returning once again to the characteristics of the extreme-right as posed by Miller-Idriss, this theme aligns with her conceptualisation as it demonstrates 'exclusionary and dehumanizing beliefs', 'existential threats and conspiracy

theories' (2021), expressed with clear prejudice against the government elites that perpetuate this narrative. Indeed, Tate's continual use of 'them' as a source of insecurity and physical threat demonstrates the danger clear existential threat that democratic government, in its current form, poses to the general populace. The sense of government conspiracy hangs clearly over this theme, with a shadowy elite and secret slavery aligning with beliefs common with the alt-right and Manosphere (Lawson, 2023). However, unlike some other extreme-right ideologists, Tate does not utilise his condemnation of political elites to call for radical political change within the democratic system (Bjørgo and Ravndal, 2019: 2), instead advocating for self-help and individual change (as explored in section 6.2). Therefore, while this theme does align with the extreme-right's populist concerns of the political elite, it does not demonstrate a willingness to overhaul or overthrow the current democratic system – and should be positioned on the spectrum, theorised in section 3, accordingly.

Furthermore, the extent to which this theme aligns with conspiracy theories about global shadowy ruling elites serves to support ideologies common within many in the Manosphere and the alt-right as many were built on the fundamental conspiracy of the Matrix, with the lore of 'red pill' and 'blue pill' now spreading way beyond the confines of the community (Lawson, 2023). Thereby, the use of this terminology within the data set is indicative of the cross-pollination and widespread adoption of the language of this group (ADL, 2018: 14). Through using terminology such as 'the psy-op', 'the elite' and the all-threatening 'they' that Tate eludes will eventually put him in jail or kill him (Appendix 2: V12, V13), Tate builds a clear sense of conspiracy that adds a further layer of danger, validity, and intrigue to his content. Therefore, in both supporting and providing personal narratives of persecution, Tate's content clearly overlaps with both the alt-right and Manosphere communities, legitimising and exposing a wider audience to them.

This theme demonstrates the mobilising and effective power of 'othering' narratives within the extreme right. Similarly, it validates the use of conspiracy theories within the extreme right and Manosphere – with a fundamental narrative of unaware individuals being suppressed by a shadowy system.

Additionally, the absence of a call for mobilised radical change further demonstrates that while the content of Tate does align with characteristics of the extreme right, he represents a milder spectrum of these beliefs, serving as an entry point to this ideology rather than an extreme manifestation.

Theme 1 and 2 demonstrate how TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate utilise themes of physical and ontological insecurity, supported by hegemonic norms, to create a sense of insecurity within his content. Similar to all extreme misogynist communities engaged with, he paints modern governance as a source of physical insecurity through their own incompetence, more concerned with spreading democratic values than protecting their citizens from crime and threats. However, he also engages with this as a distinctly masculine attack as the government is attempting to supress men who can affect change through the sexual liberation of women. He supports this idea through framing political elites as a fundamental 'other', who exist as a direct threat to the security and freedom of the general public. This 'other' group benefit from the 'slavery' of men and seek to pursue their own interests by ensuring that this continues. While the themes do intersect with both extreme right and Manosphere ideologies, Tate's presentation of female sexuality as a physical and ontological security risk, used as a tool by a shady political elite trying to extend their power aligns firmly with the Manosphere. Thereby, as theorised by Bujalka, Bender and Rich (2022), Tate aligns with the behaviours of other thought leaders within the Manosphere by using his position of power to 'exploit, catalyze, focus and securitize […] a series of latent existential anxieties around identity within a given population' to create a sense of imminent threat and insecurity within his audience (2022: 9).

6.2 Threat Solution: Promising Security

While there is a clear and dominant construction of themes of insecurity within the data set, analysis also identified themes of security: creating a solution for a problem that Tate himself played a key part in amplifying. This sense of security is constructed through three key themes: embodied hegemonic masculinity, entrepreneurial spirit and a mythical past. These themes not only

support trends noted by Bujalka, Bender and Rich (2021) but help construct a stable, familiar identity in which ontological security can be found. They also align with common narratives within the extreme misogynistic communities, constructing a clear solution to the apparent insecurity of the broader public that places Andrew Tate front and centre.

6.2.1 Embodied hegemonic masculinity

Throughout the dataset, 'reclaimed hegemonic masculinity' can be identified as a key theme to provide security. Rather than become subject to victimisation, as aggrieved entitlement claims, Tate argues that traits typically associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as physical size, strength, stoicism and competitiveness can actually help an individual to achieve security. He emphasises this by foregrounding his own appearance and life as indicative of the security this identity can provide. Consequently, he portrays, and finds security in, an example of masculinity that strongly aligns with the model of hegemonic masculinity as conceptualised in section 2:

> You wake up in the morning and you're Tate. I know it's hard for you, but let's let's, let's try and do it bit by bit. You wake up. Open your eyes, bitch here [looks left], bitch here [looks right]. Move them hoes out the way. You walked to the bathroom. You're 6 foot 3, built like Hercules. Caramel. You check the bank - full of money. You go outside, walk out into your house, a couple more bitches cleaning up, obviously. Out to the pool. One of 11 cars to drive. You pick up a $6000 Armani shirt and you put it on.Why the fuck you gonna button it up? What are you? What are you, its little bitch? You're Andrew motherfucking Tate (Appendix 2: V38).

Tate engages with a pre-formed construction of the masculine identity that his audience may perceive as under attack (see Kimmel, 2017), and implicitly links his success, and freedom of 'the Matrix', to it: 'I've literally escaped the matrix in nearly every form. So any form of oppression no longer applies to me. I'm uncounseled. I can't be cancelled' (Appendix 2: V5). He ties his fulfilment of these traits to his security: presenting his life as something for his audience to aspire to. His appearance, actions and apparent freedom signify his stability and security to an insecure audience. To return to the language used in section 3.2,

he is secure in the knowledge that the story he is telling is a good one and is happy to tell that story to others.

Tate finds legitimacy in his prominent height, physical strength, wealth and alleged sexual prowess, linking them to his success and status within society. He positions his lifestyle as something that makes him superior to the 'average' man and differentiates him from his insecure audience:

> people saying, 'hey Tate, you talk about how to get girls and how you can have all these girls but you're a 6 ft 4 kickboxing world champion millionaire. The average man can't do that'. I never said he could. I said don't be fucking average.' (Appendix 2: V36).

Tate presents his fulfilment of overtly masculine traits as a source of security and legitimacy, reclaiming hegemonic masculinity as something that gives superiority. He presents this status as something that his audience can achieve if they work hard enough and follow his advice. In 'reclaiming' the hegemonic masculine identity and explicitly linking it to his success and wealth on a transnational platform (Hope Not Hate, 2022: 1), Tate is promising a preformed communal identity to his followers in which they can find security together (Kinvall, 2004: 750).

Furthermore, Tate presents successful sexual encounters with women as further proof of his superior masculine status. His successful sex life becomes a source of status and legitimacy among his male audience. Thereby, by boasting about his presumed entitlement to sex, he simultaneously asserts himself as superior while further supporting hegemonic masculine norms:

> [Tate] But listen, I'm saying this to you very politely: I refuse to be in a sexless relationship. We can stay together and you can be loyal to me and I'll fuck other bitches.
>
> [Host] There you go.
>
> [Tate] If you wanna do that.
>
> [Host] Yep.
>
> [Tate] If you really don't want to sleep with me, no problem. You're my female and female infidelity is unacceptable in every single level.
>
> [Host] Exactly.

> [Tate] You can be with me and I'll fuck other hoes if you don't wanna have sex with me or I'll have sex with you. But I, as a full grown man, am not gonna live my life without sex.
>
> [Host] Yes.
>
> [Tate] So you either start fucking, I fuck someone else, or I kick you out. (Appendix 2: V28).

Tate presents successful sexual encounters with women as further proof of his masculine status and security. In a video repudiating monogamy, he claims 'I'm a fucking full-grown man. I'm gonna put my dick where I want to put my dick' (Appendix 2: V88), implicitly associating successful heterosexual sex, with multiple partners, to his status as a successful man. This aligns with the hierarchical nature of hegemonic masculinity as observed by Vito, Admire and Hughes (2017) and explored in section 2.2. If having less heterosexual sex is deemed emasculating and lowers social currency among men, then having 'tons of pussy' elevates it (Appendix 2: V49). His presumed entitlement to woman as sexual objects further aligns Tate's portrayal of secure masculinity with hegemonic societal assumptions, while also enforcing a social hierarchy where he sits above most, if not all, of his audience.

Situating Theme against the Literature Review

Security in 'traditional' depictions of masculinity can be found in far-right practices tied to nativism. Often framed as a counterculture backlash against feminism, far right groups will utilise narratives that draw on traditional machismo and social hierarchies to present participation in their organisations as a way for men to reclaim their threatened masculinity identity (Mudde, 2018). The social construction and weaponisation of distinct gender roles is an ideological lynchpin throughout the spectrum of right wing groups. Thereby, in promising security through the manifestation of a certain type of hegemonic masculinity, Tate's content does align with certain practices of these groups.

However, perhaps more interestingly, Tate's portrayal of hegemonic masculinity as a source of security and dominance strongly aligns with the conceptualisation of the controversial 'alpha males' of the Manosphere (Ging, 2019: 652). While much engagement with alpha and beta terminology can be

critiqued as overly simplistic, alphas can generally be understood as dominant and 'in charge, have their pick of sexual partners and have ultimate control, both of themselves and others' (Lawson, 2023). They are considered the prime examples of manhood and deemed superior within online communities to beta males who 'are the polar opposite: physically and psychologically weak, sexually unattractive, timid, submissive, meek and generally lacking in the qualities necessary to attain "real" manhood' (Lawson, 2023). Tate's construction of security through hegemonic masculinity supports this hierarchy within the Manosphere. However, the reception towards this portrayal of manhood within the Manosphere is confusing and contradictory. While some argue than men, having swallowed the red pill, should reject their beta status and strive to become an alpha (Ging, 2019: 650), some Men's Rights Activists groups argue that alpha masculinity has been hijacked by feminists and so individuals should attempt to transcend the current hierarchy entirely. Thereby, while Tate's construction of masculinity and security may align with, and appeal to, some members of the Manosphere, it is critically rejected by others.

This theme demonstrates a use of gendered hierarchies that mimic narratives within the Manosphere and some far-right groups.

6.2.2 The Self-help Paradigm
The success of Tate's construction of security also relies on the second key theme: the promotion of self-help. Tate outlines a clear path for his audience to achieve security by encouraging them to take control of all aspects of their life, be it physical appearance, work, women, or relationships. He encourages men to establish assertive relationships with the people around them as 'you're not going to be important unless you go out there and make yourself important' (Appendix 2: V74). This opinion is seen most clearly when Tate outlines how a man should act in a heterosexual relationship:

> It's just about understanding and instilling a mental frame inside of the female that makes her understand that it's really not that big a deal. That, coupled with your status and the fact that you're hard to replace, will make you be able to get away with it. And when I say get away with, I don't mean get away with. It can

be very honest and open thing. I'm telling you man, like. You'd be a [hesitates, restarts sentence] Most men would be surprised by how deviant women are. If you have a woman and you're truly cool and you're truly together and she truly loves you. You come home. 'Have you been out? dududu. You fucked that bitch?' 'I did fuck that bitch. You know what? I fucked her but her tits are not as good as yours. Come here' […]

[T] If a woman gets with a man and his frame is correct, that woman over a long enough period of time has the same political views, likes the same music, likes the same movies, has the same friends as him, watches the same things on YouTube, the same Netflix shows. If you see a woman who loves that man, doesn't she do everything the man does? (Appendix 2: V83).

Tate presents dominance and assertiveness as traits that will allow a man to act as he wants to. If, as was examined earlier, female liberation and equality are a direct source of physical and ontological insecurity for men, then through confidence and domineering language, men are able to reclaim some of the control that they are currently denied. Therefore, Tate presents a clear remedy to the masculine insecurity brought by female liberation, outlining a security that directly correlates with the insecurities that he highlights throughout his content.

Tate also encourages his audience to achieve security through adopting a self-help mentality. He foregrounds the importance of wealth building in this journey as a tool that enables freedom:

If you're rich, you are free […] If you want to learn how to get rich, find the richest person you can think of and ask them how to get rich. Now a lot of rich people aren't going to tell you I might be the richest person you know who's prepared to tell you how to get rich. If that's the case, then you can [message] me now at anytime, I'm gonna tell you exactly how to do it. […] You get rich on purpose. You get rich on purpose with very specific habits, rituals, certain things you must do. Things that rich people know and you do not know. It's time to learn. (Appendix 2: V5)

While Tate promises to enable this journey through his status as teacher, he demonstrates the importance of assertiveness, self-discipline and resilience:

'Every fucking day I don't feel like doing things that I still do. It's called discipline. It's called being a man. It's not about feeling like doing it. (Appendix 2: V98). In enlightening his audience to the insecurity and unfairness of day-to-day society, he now encourages them to discard these 'blue pill' fantasies that keep [them] trapped and in a state of 'existential peril' (Bujalka, Bender and Rich, 2022: 8) and become 'men of action' (Appendix 2: V35). He treats this status as implicit to becoming a proper man: 'And if you're a man and if you're a man, it's your job to find a way to not be sticking to those rules enough to escape the matrix and become free because what's actually most crazy about this period of history is that it's actually the easiest time in human history to become rich' (Appendix 2: V5). Through outlining a clear path to security, reliant on the agency and self-determination he argues that men are currently denied, Tate offers a highly gendered construction of freedom and security for his audience based in a preconstructed idea of masculinity.

Situating Theme against the Literature Review

Although the 'self-help' solution to insecurity is one common to the thought leaders of the Manopshere (Bujalka, Bender and Rich, 2022: 4), to state that it is the defining paradigm of the community would be misrepresentative; each sub-group has their own solution to the insecurity caused by women. Men Going Their Own Way, for example, believe that the best solution to the insecurity caused by modern society is to 'go their own way' and avoid interacting with women entirely. The approach promoted by Tate strongly aligns with that of the Pick Up Artists and focuses on 'learning the game' and manoeuvring social situations and interactions to better suit the individual. Indeed, the belief within the Manosphere that you can become an alpha male if you try does naturally support a self-help narrative. However, Bujalka, Bender and Rich (2022) question how organically this theme emerges within this community as often it is the thought-leaders themselves that promote this solution – pointing their audience towards their own materials for purchase as a way to achieve it. Thereby, while the presence of this theme within the data set does align the theme with the behaviours and narratives of other Manosphere influencers, it also serves to remind us of the variation of communities, ideologies and beliefs within this group.

In approaching the male/female relationship dynamic as one in which men can manipulate women to do their bidding, Tate is perpetuating misogynistic narratives popular within Alt-right communities, with which the Manosphere intersects. Alt-right bloggers such as Matt Forney preach toxic narratives that women are stupid, simple creatures who need to be led by men; it is easy to note the similarities between Tate' 'frames' and Matt Forney's comments (ADL, 2018: 9). Tate's narratives promote male-female interactions that serve to strengthen misogynistic justifications for hierarchical gender relationships. This gives credence to the claim made by Lawrence, Simhony-Philpott and Stone, that misogyny has become another manner in which far-right and extreme right organisations seek to raise the status of white men through the degradation of others (Lawrence, Simhony-Philpott and Stone, 2021: 8).

Therefore, this theme demonstrates a clear commonality between Andrew Tate and other influencers within the Manosphere environment.

6.2.3 Legitimacy in a glorious past

The literature review and theoretical framework demonstrate that the promise to return to a mythic, golden past is central to far-right narratives and play a fundamental part in a promise of ontological security. Tate's construction of security through reclaiming hegemonic masculinity and assertive demeanours also finds legitimacy in a mythic past, situating the call of 'men of action' in the sacrifices and achievements of historic men:

> I believe that men are more capable of independent thought [than women] because I believe that men are more evolved for battle and war. So if we had an idea which nobody else agreed with, we're more capable defending it where we've evolved to saying no, the sky is blue, it's not green, OK, pull a sword out, we'll we'll defend our idea (Appendix 2: V86).

Throughout the dataset, there is the constant use of historical examples of men as providers and warriors: 'We didn't want to die in the Titanic. Guess what happened? We died in the Titanic' (Appendix 2: V27). In section 4, the work of Erble demonstrates that narratives founded in the past can act as a form of

fantasy, remedying 'anxiety by showing subjects 'their place' in the world—an apparently whole, stable and complete identity' founded in biological narratives (2017: 249). As such, in drawing on historic feats and events, and presenting them as men being men, Tate offers a form of security to his audience legitimated by the traits of historic identities of men as warriors, protectors and providers – exemplifying the assertiveness, sacrifice and discipline he is encouraging his audience to now emulate:

> We act. We're men of action. We get things done. So the world got built. All the men who built the fucking skyscrapers felt scared. They did it anyway. You become a man of action. Stop worrying about how you feel and start worrying about what you're supposed to be doing. (Appendix 2: V35)

Using historical examples, Tate establishes a clear sense of place through the replication of collective memory and cultural narratives, images that offer 'security, stability, and simple answers' to remedy feelings of anxiety and meaninglessness (Kinnvall, 2004: 742). While although not explicitly stated, his road to security mimics a desire to return to an 'untouched' past.

This desire to return to the past is exemplified as Tate discusses male-female relationships, utilising a past 'standard' to demonstrate how much things have changed:

> Yeah. I don't think the world has ever been equal. I'm not saying that women should completely and utterly be slaves. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that the modern society we live in has been built by men. All the roads, you see, all the buildings, you see everything around you. Men built all of it. […]
>
> Women's job always was procreation, to look after the family and to look after the man. That's all that they had to do. And the man would go out there and risk his life and spend his time building the modern world. Men are still out here building the modern world. But when they come home now, the girl's like, oh, why should I cook for you? I think, I think women are failing in their role. I think women are failing (Appendix 2: V85).

Tate relies on a sanitised and over-simplified perception of the mythic past to lend credence to his presentation of security, and insecurity. By framing his narratives as an attempt to return to this mythic past, where men were always 'men of action' and women did their 'job', he presents a clear way that his male

audience can return to the ontological security and status they once, clearly enjoyed. He builds on fantasies of the past, of an old-fashioned gender dynamic where women filled the domestic sphere and men, the public. These narratives provide a sense of identity and purpose in the face of ontological insecurity: a belief that if that's how it was before, that security can be achieved again (Merino et al., 2020: 79).

Situating Theme against the Literature Review

Narratives of the mythic past can be clearly identified as a hallmark of the nationalist identity promoted by far-right ideologies, where the nation can be understood through gendered terminology (Spivak, 1988: 3). Often these groups practice strict male and female roles entrenched in historic tradition; women are portrayed as vulnerable and peaceful whose safety from 'evil minorities, must be ensured by aggression and violence by the men of the group (Ebner and Davey, 2019:34). Fundamental to the success of this narrative is the manipulation of established gender roles to ensure the 'enduring image of seemingly passive, but wronged white femininity' (Blee, 2002: 115): the belief that good white women are being raped by non-white men, endangering their lives and virtue. While Tate does not extend his critique of modern heterosexual relationship dynamics to attack minorities, he does suggest that changes brought on by the search for equality have resulted in systemic insecurity and promotes a return to a more historic dynamic.

This theme identifies the similarity between the mythic narratives of the far-right and the securitizing actions of Andrew Tate.

Theme 3, 4 and 5 demonstrate how the TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate utilises themes of hegemonic masculinity, self-help and the mythic past to create a sense of security within his content. He presents a reclaimed hegemonic identity as a fundamental source of security, using his own lifestyle and apparent success to demonstrate the benefits of such an approach to life. He, like many other influencers that interact with the Manosphere, promotes a clear self-help paradigm to gain this status, championing discipline, assertiveness and aggression as tools that will help the audience reach a state of security. This

journey can be aided through the resources that Tate himself provides – albeit for a fee. Furthermore, these themes are justified through situating them against a mythic past, painting this journey as a return to the old way of doing things. Through highlighting past masculine actions, Tate paints the journey as reinstating the 'proper' way. These themes intersect strongly with the nativist/nationalist language of the far-right and Manosphere communities. Perhaps, more concerningly, Tate's presentation of women as individuals who need to be guided by masculine figures in their lives, even going as far to state that they are 'barely sentient' (Appendix 2: V65), perpetuates some of the more extreme narratives against women within these communities.

7. Conclusion

This dissertation set out to understand how TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate utilised themes of hegemonic masculinity and ontological insecurity to intersect with online extreme misogynistic communities, and why this content was appealing. This research was guided by the main question *How does the TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate utilise themes of ontological (in)security and hegemonic masculinity to promote extremist ideologies?* This approach was shaped through a framework of ontological (in)security, which understands security to be an individual experience – and reliant on a continual sense of self within a changing world; a serious challenge to an individual's fundamental assumptions results in insecurity. Through this framework, and utilising thematic analysis, this researcher found that the TikTok content of Andrew Tate does engage with extremist ideologies common with the spectrum of the far-right online community and the Manosphere and is indicative of the cross-pollination between multiple online extremist communities.

The literature review identified the key characteristics of far-right and extreme right organisations, based in the work of Cas Mudde and complemented by others such as Miller-Idriss. The basic framework of populism, nativism and authoritarianism, supported by Miller-Idriss's more specific adjustments, provided a framework to measure themes against and gave a clear baseline moving into the analysis phase. Similarly, the literature demonstrated a clear correlation between the far-right, extreme-right, alt-right and Manosphere, outlining shared ideologies and language between the groups – the conceptualisation of a spectrum allowed the variation within ideologies to be accounted for. This thesis found a clearly demonstrated cross-pollination of ideologies between multiple online extremist communities within the works of academics such as Blee (2002), Hoffman (2020) and Hoffman, Ware, and Shapiro (2020). The work of Blee, supported by that of the ADL (2018) clearly identifies misogyny as a key unifying narrative across these environments, with anti-feminist narratives remaining a constant, although not always addressed, presence. Finally, the literature review helped interrogate the role that thought leaders, or influencers, may play within these online communities. While the work of Bujalka, Bender and Rich (2021) focused on Youtube, their

observations of the clear cycles of security and insecurity these individuals perpetuate outlined a trend that the content of Andrew Tate could be held against. Their work also introduced the effectiveness of ontological (in)security theory within the context of this study.

The identification and acknowledgement of the inter-connected nature of these communities and organisations as a researcher is important. As the May 2023 incident referenced at the start of this thesis demonstrates, it is becoming more common for individuals to identify with one or more of these extreme misogynistic communities and express views that represent this. Therefore, in order to truly be able to understand the threat posed by individuals who stem from these communities, it is useful to understand how they support and feed off of each other.

Thematic analysis was used to address aim 1*: identify the key themes within the TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate,* and evaluated against the aforementioned literature to achieve aim 2, *critically evaluate these themes with consideration to the ideologies perpetuated by online misogynistic communities.* To this end, 5 themes were identified, understood through the tiers of security and insecurity. These themes were 'a dangerous liberal agenda', 'the elite v the slaves', 'embodied hegemonic masculinity', 'the self-help paradigm' and 'legitimacy in a glorious past'. Together they demonstrate a cycle of security and insecurity within the content featuring Andrew Tate that relies on feelings of ontological insecurity and aggrieved entitlement within his audience. Critical analysis of these themes against the trends within the literature concludes that the content of Andrew Tate can, and does, intersect with narratives found within the far right, alt-right and the Manosphere, and that these narratives can escalate in their severity. That being said the lack of clear political ambition expressed suggests that Tate more closely aligns with the Manosphere rather than the far-right.

Thereby, while the themes produced by TikTok content featuring Andrew Tate may, at times only partially align with these communities, it may inspire engagement with different, potentially more extreme, communities

through a 'gateway' effect as narratives that may be considered otherwise extreme, are normalised, and perpetuated within echo chambers.

Implications and Recommendations

This thesis sought to critically engage with the TikTok content of Andrew Tate and situate it against a broader understanding of the far-right, extreme right and Manosphere to address a critical gap in the literature. The findings demonstrate that while Andrew Tate does not promote the use of mass violence, his content does align with those of some extremist communities. Therefore, this researcher recommends further research is undertaken on the role that Tate and similar individuals play in the normalisation of extremist ideologies on social media. Some specific recommendations are as follows.

Comparative Case Studies

The scope of this thesis focused solely on the presence of Andrew Tate on TikTok. This focus was chosen as TikTok represents a hugely popular and relativity under-engaged platform with a large user base of individuals under the age of 24. Although currently, few have the notoriety of Tate, effort should be made to understand how other Manosphere influencers present content on the platform. This would strengthen understanding of how influencers interact and promote extreme ideologies on the platform, key to understanding their power in shaping the appeal and narratives within online misogynistic communities to begin with.

Researchers specifically concerned with Andrew Tate should also consider expanding the scope of their engagement beyond this platform, potentially to another short video formats, such as Youtube Shorts or Instagram Reels, to test themes replicability in themes and findings. This would increase the legitimacy of the conclusions drawn within this thesis as well as demonstrate the broader influence of this individual within social media, and help situate conversations that are trying to educate and teach critical thinking in the face of these narratives.

Due to the dearth of secondary literature, this thesis maintained a wide focus on extreme misogynistic communities and can be seen as limited by its homogonous approach to the Manosphere – treating it as a collective instead of focusing on a singular sub-community. Future research should consider comparing the content of Andrew Tate to the narratives and characteristics of the Pick-Up Artist community or the Men's Rights Activists. This focus would allow for consideration of themes that this thesis had to discard, such as the numerical valuation of women, the role of physical fitness, and the gamification of dating culture. Taking this approach would allow clear themes of anti-feminism to be explored further – and result in a concise evaluation of where exactly the content of Andrew Tate is situated within the Manosphere.

Awareness related research

The concerns about Andrew Tate's content and ideologies has largely been raised by parents of teenage boys and young men, who see them modelling behaviour and mannerisms that Tate promotes online. While this thesis took a theoretical approach to engaging with this issue, merit could be found in pursuing an interview-based study with these individuals. This would be hugely beneficial to clearly identify the attractiveness of these ideologies in the first place and better understand and teach awareness in the future.

In conclusion, Andrew Tate is a symptom of persistent narratives of crisis masculinity and disillusion within modern society. His weaponisation and manipulation of these narratives for his own infamy, is indicative of the powerful emotive reactions individuals have to his content – after all, my own reaction led me to write a whole thesis about it. The overlaping of narratives within his content at this point may seem trivial, however, the 'rabbit hole' is becoming an ever-popular phenomenon. Recent events of violence demonstrate that online extremist ideologies and content can have real world implications and that every individual starts somewhere. While watching a TikTok video is a process of passive engagement, the design of these algorithms means that while it may be the first video you watch that contain those themes and ideologies, it definitely will not be the last and a developed understanding of

how these narratives work is a vital step in negotiating the impact that these ideologies have.

8. Bibliography

Agius C, Rosamond AB and Kinnvall C (2020) 'Populism, Ontological Insecurity and Gendered Nationalism: Masculinity, Climate Denial and Covid-19', *Politics, Religion and Ideology,* 21(4): 432- 450.

Albertazzi D and Bonansinga D (2023) 'Beyond Anger: The Populist Radical Right on TikTok', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies,* online: https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2163380

Aldera S, Emam A, Al-Qurishi M, Alrubian M and Alothaim A (2021) 'Online Extremism Detection in Textual Context: A Systematic Review', *IEEE Access,* 9: 42384-42396.

Alvari H, Sarkar S, Sharkarian S (2019) 'Detection of Violent Extremists in Social Media' [Conference Paper], *International Conference on Data Intelligence and Security,* South Padre Island, accessed 17 June 2023, doi: 10.1109/ICDIS.2019.00014.

Antaki C, Billig MG, Edwards D, and Potter JA (2003) **'**Discourse Analysis Means Doing Analysis: A Critique of Six Analytic Shortcomings**'**, *Discourse Analysis Online***,** 1**:** online. http://www.shu.ac.uk/daol/articles/v1/n1/a1/antaki2002002-paper.html

Anti-Defamation League (2018) *When Women are the Enemy: The Intersection of Misogyny and White Supremacy*, Accessed 22 March 2023. Available at: https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/when-women-are-the-enemy-the-intersection-of-misogyny-and-white-supremacy

Attride- Stirling J (2001) 'Thematic Networks: An Analytic Tool for Qualitative Research', *Qualitative Research,* 1(3): 385-405.

Bakshy E, Hofman JM, Mason WA and Watts DJ (2011) 'Everyone's an Influencer: Quantifying Influence on Twitter' [Conference Paper], *WSDM '11: Proceedings of the forth ACM international conference on web search and data mining*, Hong Kong, assed 11 April 2023, https://doi.org/10.1145/1935826.1935845

Basch CH, Fera J, Pellicane J, Pellicane A and Basch CE (2021) 'Videos With the Hashtag #vaping on TikTok and Implications for Informed Decision-making by Adolescents: Descriptive Study', *JMIR Paediatrics and Parenting,* 4(4): online. 10.2196/30681

Bates L (2021) *Men Who Hate Women*, New York, Simon and Schuster Publishing.

Beckett L (2021) 'The Misogynist Incel Movement is Spreading. Should it be Classified as a Terror Threat?', *The Guardian,* accessed 2 July 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/mar/03/incel-movement-terror-threat-canada

Bennett A (2014) 'Case Study Methods: Design, Use and Comparative Advantages' in Sprinz, DF and Wolinsky- Nahmias, Y (eds) *Models, Numbers and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations*, Michigan, University of Michigan Press.

Bilgan P (2003) 'Individual and Societal Dimensions of Security', *International Studies Review,* 5(2): 203-222.

Bjørgo T and Ravndal JA (2019) *Extreme right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns and Responses*. Policy Brief. The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism.

Björkdahl A (2019) *Ontological (In)Security and Gender* [Masters Thesis], Lund University, accessed 20 May 2023. https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordOId=8993375&fileOId=8993376

Blee KM (2002) *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Booth K (1991) 'Security and Emancipation', *Review of International Studies,* 17(4): 313-326.

Borum R (2012) 'Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories', *Journal of Strategic Security,* 4(4): 7-36.

Braun V and Clark V (2021) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*, Los Angeles, Sage.

Braun V and Clarke V (2006) 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3: 77-101.

Bujalka E, Rich B and Bender S (2022) 'The Manosphere as an Online Protection Racket: How the Red Pill Monetizes Male Need for Security in Modern Society', *Fast Capitalism,* 19(1): online. doi: 10.32855/fcapital.202201.001

Burgess S (2023) 'Andrew Tate: Controversial Influencer Pushed On to 'Teen's' YouTube Shorts and Instagram Video Feeds', *Sky News,* accessed 11 April 2023. https://news.sky.com/story/andrew-tate-controversial-influencer-pushed-on-to-teens-youtube-shorts-and-instagram-video-feeds-12849572

Buschmeyer A and Lengersdorf D (2016) 'The Differentiation of Masculinity as a Challenge for the Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity', *International Journal of Masculinity Studies,* 11(3): 190-207.

Butler J (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* New York, Routledge.

Center on Extremism (2022) *Extremists, Far Right Figures Exploit Recent Changes to Twitter*, Anti-Defamation League, accessed 14 June 2023. https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/extremists-far-right-figures-exploit-recent-changes-twitter

Chaiechi T and Eijdenberg (2022) 'Entrepreneurship, Knowledge-Economy and Economic Success of Cities: A Scoping Review and Thematic Analysis' in Chaiechi T and Wood J (eds.) *Community Empowerment, Sustainable Cities, and Transformative Economies,* Singapore, Springer.

Chang W (2022) 'The Monstrous-Feminine in the Incel Imagination: Investigating the Representation of Women as "Femoids" on/r/ Braincels', *Feminist Media Studies*, 22(2): 254-270.

Chapple C (2020) 'TikTok Crosses 2 Billion Downloads After Best Quarter For Any App Ever', *Sensor Tower,* accessed 22 June 2023. https://sensortower.com/blog/tiktok-downloads-2-billion

Chavez P (2022) 'Towards Digital Solidarity', *Lawfare,* accessed 9 July 2023. https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/toward-digital-solidarity

Christensen A and Jensen SQ (2014) 'Combining Hegemonic Masculinity and Intersectionality', *International Journal for Masculinity Studies,* 9(1): 60-75.

Connell B (2002) 'Hegemonic Masculinity' in Jackson S and Scott S (eds.) *Gender: A Sociological Reader*, London and New York, Routledge.

Connell RW and Messerschmidt JW (2005) 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society,* 19(6): 829-859.

Conway M (2020) 'Routing the Extreme Right: Challenges for Social Media Platforms', *The RUSI Journal,* 165(1): 108-113.

Cooper R (2023) *Twitter.* accessed 4 June 2023. https://twitter.com/Rich_Cooper?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

Cousineau L (2022) 'Social Media Misogyny: The New Way Andrew Tate Brought Us the Same Old Hate', *The Conservation,* accessed 11 April 2023. https://theconversation.com/social-media-misogyny-the-new-way-andrew-tate-brought-us-the-same-old-hate-191928

Cremer T (2023) 'A Europeanisation of American politics? Trumpism and the Populist Radical Right in the United States', *Journal of Language and Politics,* 22(3): 396- 414.

Crociani-Windland L and Yates C (2020) 'Masculinity, Affect and the Search for Certainty in an Age of Precarity', *Free Associations,* 78: 119-140.

Croft S (2012) *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the Search for Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Das S (2022) 'TikTok 'Still Hosting Toxic Posts' of Banned Influencer Andrew Tate', *The Guardian,* accessed 12 April 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/nov/06/tiktok-still-hosting-toxic-posts-of-banned-influencer-andrew-tate

DiBranco A (2020) 'Male Supremacist Terrorism as a Rising Threat', *ICCT,* accessed 2 July 2023. https://www.icct.nl/index.php/publication/male-supremacist-terrorism-rising-threat

Donaldson M (1993) 'What is Hegemonic Masculinity?', *Theory and Society,* 22(5): 643-657.

Dowling B (2023) 'TikTok Bans: What the Evidence Says About Security and Privacy Concerns', *The Conversation,* accessed 22 June 2023. https://guides.lib.monash.edu/citing-referencing/harvard2020-web-news-socialmedia

Ebner J and Davey J (2019) 'How Women Advance the Internationalization of the Far Right'*, Program on Extremism*, January: 32-39.

Eckstein H (1992) 'Case Studies and Theory in Political Science' in Eckstein, H (ed.) *Regarding Politics: Essays on Political Theory, Stability and Change*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

Ejdus F (2018) 'Critical Situations, Fundamental Questions and Ontological Insecurity in World Politics', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 21(4): 883-908.

Erble J (2019) 'Narrative, Desire, Ontological Security, Transgression': Fantasy as a Factor in International Politics', *Journal of International Relations and Development,* 22(1): 243-268.

Fazackerley A (2023) 'Vulnerable Boys Are Drawn In': Schools Fear Spread of Andrew Tate's Misogyny', *The Guardian,* accessed 11 April 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jan/07/andrew-tate-misogyny-schools-vulnerable-boys

Fisher M (2022) *The Chaos Machine: The Inside Story of How Social Media Rewired Our Minds and Our World,* Boston, Little, Brown and Company.

Froio C and Ganesh B (2019) 'The Transnationalisation of Far Right Discourse on Twitter', *European Societies,* 21(4): 513-539.

Gao Y, Liu F and Gao L (2023) 'Echo Chamber Effects on Short Video Platforms', *Scientific Reports,* 13(6282): 1-17.

Gentry CE (2022) 'Misogynistic Terrorism: It Has Always Been Here', *Critical Studies on Terrorism,* 15(1): 209-224.

Gerring J (2004) 'What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?', *The American Political Science Review,* 98(2): 341-354.

Gerstenfeld PB, Grant DR, and Chiang C (2003) 'Hate Online: A Content Analysis of Extremist Internet Sites', *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy,* 3(1): 29–44.

Giddens A (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age,* Cambridge, Polity Press.

Ging D (2017) 'Alphas, Betas, and Incels: Theorizing the Masculinites of the Manosphere, *Men and Masculinities,* 22(4): 638-657.

Google (2023) 'Andrew Tate', *Google Trends,* accessed 12 May 2023. https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=today%205-y&q=Andrew%20Tate&hl=en

Govers J, Feldman P, Dant A and Patros P (2023) 'Down the Rabbit Hole: Detecting Online Extremism, Radicalization and Politicised Hate Speech,', ACM Computing Surveys, online: https://doi.org/10.1145/3583067.

Graff A, Kapur R and Walters SD (2019) 'Introduction: Gender and the Rise of the Global Right', *Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 44(3): 541- 560.

Grant J and MacDonald F (2020) 'The 'Alt' Right, Toxic Masculinity, and Violence' in Macdonald F and Dobrowolsky A (eds.) *Turbulent Times, Transformational Possibilities? Gender and Politics Today*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

Groes-Green C (2009) 'Hegemonic and Subordinated Masculinities: Class, Violence and Sexual Performance Among Young Mozambican Men', *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 18(4): 286-304.

Gusterson H (2017) 'From Brexit to Trump: Anthropology and the Rise of Nationalist Populism', *American Ethnologist,* 44(2): 209-214.

Hall S (1988) *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left,* London, Verso.

Haq SN (2023) 'Andrew Tate's Muslim Fanbase is Growing. Some Say He's Exploiting Islam for Internet Popularity', *CNN,* accessed 2 July 2023. https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/16/world/andrew-tate-muslim-men-Manosphere-intl-cmd/index.html

Hayes M and Freeze C (2020) 'Police Lay First Terrorism Charge For Toronto Case Involving Misogyny', *The Globe and Mail*, 19 May, accessed 4 July 2023.

Available at: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-police-lay-first-terrorism-charge-for- toronto-case-involving-misogyny/.

Herath C and Whittaker J (2021) 'Online Radicalization: Moving Beyond a Simple Dichotomy', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* online. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2021.1998008

Hoffman B, Ware J and Shapiro E (2020) 'Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 43(7): 565-587.

Hope Not Hate (2022) *The Violent Misogynist Reaching Millions: A Briefing on Andrew Tate*, Hope Not Hate, accessed 1 July 2023. https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Andrew-Tate-Briefing-Final.pdf

Jewkes R, Morrell R, Hearn J, Lundqvist E, Blackbeard D, Lindegger G, Quayle M, Sikweyiya Y, Gottzén L (2015) 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Combining Theory and Practice in Gender Interventions', *Culture, Health and Sexuality,* 17(2): 112-127.

Kanthawala S, Cotter K, Foyle K and Decook JR (2022) 'It's the Methodology For Me: A Systematic Review of Early Approaches to Studying TikTok' [Conference Paper], *Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences,* Hawaii, accessed 28 May 2023. http://hdl.handle.net/10125/79716.

Kimmel M (2017) *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era,* New York, Nation Books.

Kinnvall C (2004) 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security', *Political Psychology,* 25(5): 741-767.

Kinnvall C (2007) *Globalization and Religious Nationalism in India: The Search for Ontological Security,* Abingdon, Routledge.

Kinnvall C (2016) 'The Postcolonial has Moved into Europe: Bordering, Security and Ethno-Cultural Belonging', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies,* 54: 152-168.

Kinnvall C (2017) 'Feeling Ontologically (In)Secure: States, Traumas and the Governing of Gendered Space', *Cooperation and Conflict,* 52(1): 90-108.

Kinnvall C and Mitzen J (2017) 'An Introduction to the Special Issue: Ontological Insecurities in World Politics', *Cooperation and Conflict,* 52(1): 1-11.

Klug D, Qin Y, Evans M and Kaufman G (2021) 'Trick and Please. A Mixed-Method Study On User Assumptions About the TikTok Algorithm' [Conference Paper] *ACM Web Science Conference*, Virtual Event, accessed 1 Jun 2023. https://doi.org/10.1145/3447535.3462512

Koehler, D. (2017) *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century: The 'Nationalist Socialist Underground' and the History of Terror from the Far Right in Germany,* Abingdon, Routledge.

Krutrok ME (2021) 'Algorithmic Closeness in Mourning: Vernaculars of the Hashtag #grief on TikTok', *Social Media + Society,* (July-September): 1-12.

Kumar P and Mukherjee D (2021) 'Subordinate and Marginalised Masculinities and the COVID-19 Pandemic', *Economics and Political Weekly,* accessed 1 July 2023. https://www.epw.in/engage/article/subordinate-and-marginalised-masculinities-and

Laing RD (1965) *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness,* London: Penguin.

Lawrence D, Simhony-Philpott L and Stone D (2021) *Anti-Semitism and Misogyny: Overlap and Interplay.* Report. Online: HOPE Not Hate and Antisemitism Policy Trust, accessed 1 April 2023. Available at: https://hopenothate.org.uk/2021/09/26/antisemitism-misogyny-overlap-and-interplay/

Lawson R (2023) 'A Dictionary of the Manopshere: Five Terms to Understand the Language of Online Male Supremacists', *The Conversation,* accessed 22 July 2023. https://theconversation.com/a-dictionary-of-the-Manosphere-five-terms-to-understand-the-language-of-online-male-supremacists-200206

Leitch S and Pickering P (2022) *Rethinking Social Media and Extremism,* Canberra, Australian National University Press.

Literat I (2021) ''Teachers Act like We Are Robots': TikTok as a Window into Youth Experiences of Online Learning During COVID-19', *AERA Open,* 7(1): 1-15.

Lumsden K and Harmer E (2019) *Online Othering: Exploring Digital Violence and Discrimination on the Web,* Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.

Mackinac Center (2019) 'The Overton Window', *The Mackinac Center for Public Policy,* accessed 15 July 2023. https://www.mackinac.org/OvertonWindow

Marcos- Marne H, Plaza- Colodro C and O'Flynn C (2021) 'Populism and New Radical-Right Parties: The Case of VOX', *Politics,* online: https://doi.org/10.1177/02633957211019587

Mattheis A (2018) 'Shieldmaidens of Whiteness: (Alt) Maternalism and Women Recruiting for the Far/Alt-Right', *Journal for Deradicalization*, 17: 128-162.

McSweeney B (1999) *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McSwiney J (2021) 'Far-Right Recruitment and Mobilization on Facebook: The Case of Australia' in Devries M, Bessant J and Watts R (eds.) *Rise of the Far Right: Technologies of Recruitment and Mobilization*, London, Rowman and Littlefield.

Meleagrou-Hitchens A and Kaderbhai N (2017) 'Research Perspectives on Online Radicalisation: A Literature Review, 2006–2016', *VoxPol,* online. https://icsr.info/2017/05/03/icsr-vox-pol-paper-research-perspectives-online-radicalisation-literature-review-2006-2016-2/

Merino PK, Capelos T and Kinnvall C (2020) 'Getting Inside 'the Head' of the Far Right'': Pyschological Responses to the Socio-Political Context' in Ashe SD, Busher J, Macklin G and Winter A (eds.) *Researching the Far Right,* New York, Routledge.

Michaels A (2023) 'From Zero to Hate in Just a Tik and a Tok', *moment,* accessed 22 June 2023. https://momentmag.com/tiktok-pipeline/

Miller-Idriss C (2021) *White Supremacist Extremism and the Far Right in the U.S,* Gale, accessed 24 June 2023. https://www.gale.com/intl/essays/cynthia-miller-idriss-white-supremacist-extremism-far-right-us

Montag C, Yang H and Elhai JD (2021) 'On the Psychology of TikTok Use: A First Glimpse From Empirical Findings', *Frontiers in Public Health,* 9: 1-6.

Morrell R, Jewkes R and Lindegger G (2012) 'Hegemonic Masculinity/Masculinities in South Africa: Culture, Power, and Gender Politics', *Men and Masculinities,* 15(1): 11-30.

Mudde, C (1993) *The Ideology of the Extreme Right,* Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Mudde C (2005) 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, 39(4): 541-63.

Mudde C (2007) *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Mudde C (2016) 'The Study of Populist Radical Right Parties: Towards a Fourth Wave', *C-Rex Working Paper Series,* 1: 1-23.

Mudde, C (2018) 'Why is the Far Right Dominated By Men?', *The Guardian*, 17 August. accessed 13 Jun 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/17/why-is-the-far-right-dominated-by-men

Mudde C (2019) 'Why the Far Right is Obsessed with "Gender Ideology", *The New Statesman,* accessed 15 May 2023.

https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2019/09/why-far-right-obsessed-gender-ideology

Nagel J (1998) 'Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 21(2): 242-69.

Nesbitt-Larking P (2022) 'Constructing Narratives of Masculinity: Online followers of Jordan B. Peterson', *Psychology of Men and Masculinities,* 23(3): 309-320.

Newman E (2010) 'Critical Human Security Studies', *Review of International Studies,* 36(1): 77-94.

Nilan P, Roose J, Peucker M and Turner BS (2023) 'Young Masculinities and Right-Wing Populism in Australia', *Youth,* 3(1): 285-299.

Paechter C (2018) 'Rethinking the Possibilities for Hegemonic Femininity: Exploring a Gramscian Framework', *Women's Studies International Forum,* 68: 121-128.

Papadamou K, Zannettou J, Blackburn J, De Cristofaro E, Stringhini G and Sirivianos M (2021) '"How Over is it?" Understanding the Incel Community on YouTube', *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 5(2): 412-25.

Pretorius C, McCashin D and Coyle D (2022) 'Mental Health Professionals as Influencers on TikTok and Instagram: What Role do They Play in Mental Health Literacy and Help-Seeking?', *Internet Interventions,* 30: 1-7.

Pryzgoda J and Chrisler JC (2000) 'Definitions of Gender and Sex: The Subtleties of Meaning', *Sex Roles,* 43(7/8): 553- 569.

Radford A (2023) 'Who is Andrew Tate? The Self-Proclaimed Misogynist Influencer', *BBC News,* accessed 11 April 2023. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-64125045

Ribeiro MH, Blackburn J, Bradlyn B, De Cristofaro E, Stringhini G, Long S, Greenberg S and Zannettou S (2021) 'The Evolution of the Manosphere Across the Web' [Conference Paper] *International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, Virtual Event. Accessed 20 June 2023.

Rossdale C (2015) 'Enclosing Critique: The Limits of Ontological Security', *International Political Sociology*, 9(4): 369–386.

Rumelili B (2015) *Conflict Resolution and Ontological Security: Peace Anxieties,* Abingdon and New York, Routledge.

Runyan AS and Peterson VS (2015) *Global Gender Issues in the New Millennium,* Boulder, Westview Press.

Schellewald A (2021) 'Communicative Forms on TikTok: Perspectives From Digital Ethnography', *International Journal of Communication*, 15: 1437-1457.

Schreckinger B (2017) 'World War Meme: How a Group of Anonymous Keyboard Commandos Conquered the Internet for Donald Trump—and Plans to Deliver Europe to the Far Right', *Politico,* accessed 11 June 2023. https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/03/memes-4chan-trump-supporters-trolls-internet-214856/

Scrinzi F (2017) 'Gender and Women in the Front National Discourse and Policy: From 'Mothers of the Nation' to 'Working Mothers'?', *New Formations,* 91: 87-101.

Shani G (2017) 'Human Security as Ontological Security: A Post- Colonial Approach', *Postcolonial Studies,* 20(3): 275-293.

Shaw M (1993) 'There Is No Such Thing as Society: Beyond Individualism and Statism in International Security Studies', *Review of International Studies,* 19(2): 159-175.

Siddiqui F and Merrill JB (2023) 'Elon Musk's Twitter Pushes Hate Speech, Extremist Content into 'For You' Pages', *The Washington Post,* accessed 15 June 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/03/30/elon-musk-twitter-hate-speech/

Smith RM, Parrott DJ, Swartout KM and Tharp AT (2015) 'Deconstructing Hegemonic Masculinity: The Roles of Antifemininity, Subordination to Women, and Sexual Dominance in Men's Perpetration of Sexual Aggression', *Psychology Men, and Masculinity,* 16(2): 160-169.

Spierings N (2020) 'Why Gender and Sexuality are both Trivial and Pivotal in Populist Radical Right Politics' in Dietze G and Roth J (eds.) *Right-Wing Populism and Gender*, Bielefield, transcript Verlag.

Spierings N, Zaslove A, Mügge LM and de Lange SL (2015) 'Gender and Populist Radical-Right Politics: An Introduction', *Patterns of Prejudice,* 49(1-2): 3-15.

Spivak G (1988) *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics,* New York & London, Routledge.

Statista (2023) *Number of Internet and Social Media Users Worldwide as of April 2023,* Statista, accessed 15 June 2023. https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/

Strunk K (2022) 'Biological Essentialism' in Strunk K and Shelton SA (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of Queer Studies in Education,* Leiden, Brill.

Sung M (2022) 'Andrew Tate Banned from YouTube, TikTok, Facebook and Instagram', *ABC News,* accessed 11 April 2023.

https://www.nbcnews.com/pop-culture/viral/andrew-tate-facebook-instagram-ban-meta-rcna43998

Tappan M (1997) 'Interpretive Psychology: Stories, Circles, and Understanding Lived Experience', *Journal of Social Issues*, 53(4): 645–656.

Tidy J (2023) 'TikTok Answers Three Big Cyber-Security Fears About the App', *BBC News,* accessed 22 June 2023. https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-64797355

Vallegra M and Zurbriggen EL (2022) 'Hegemonic Masculinities in the 'Manosphere': A Thematic Analysis of Beliefs About Men and Women on The Red Pill and Incel', *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy,* 22(2): 465-758.

Van Valkenburgh SP (2021) 'Digesting the Red Pill: Masculinity and Neoliberalism in the Manosphere', *Men and Masculinities,* 24(1): 84-103.

Vijay D and A Gekker, 'Playing Politics: How Sabarimala Played Out on TikTok', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 65(5): 712–734.

Vito C, Admire A and Hughes E (2017) 'Masculinity, Aggrieved Entitlement, and Violence: Considering the Isla Vista Mass Shooting', *International Journal for Masculinity Studies,* 13(2): 86-102.

Weale S (2023) 'We See Misogyny Every Day': How Andrew Tate's Twisted Ideology Infiltrated British Schools', *The Guardian,* accessed 11 April 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/feb/02/andrew-tate-twisted-ideology-infiltrated-british-schools

Weimann G and Masri N (2020) 'Research Note: Spreading Hate on TikTok', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 46(5): 752-765.

Weimann G and Masri N (2021) 'TikTok's Spiral of Antisemitism', *Journalism and Media,* 2: 697-708.

Weinmann G (2004) *How Modern Terrorism uses the Internet [report]*, United States Institute for Peace, United States Government.

Wells, D (2023) 'Misogyny is Often the Connection Between Overlapping Far-Right Ideologies', *The Interpreter,* accessed 2 July 2023. https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/misogyny-often-connection-between-overlapping-far-right-ideologies

Winter C, Neumann P, Meleagrou-Hitchens A, Ranstrop M, Vidino L and Fürst J (2020) 'Online Extremism: Research Trends in Internet Activism, Radicalization, and Counter-Strategies', *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 14(2): 1-20.

Worth O (2021) 'Reasserting Hegemonic Masculinity: Women's Leadership Within the Far Right', *International Affairs,* 97(2): 503-21.

Yin RK (2009) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Los Angeles, Sage.

Zulli D and Zulli JD (2020) 'Extending the Internet Meme: Conceptualizing Technological Mimesis and Imitation Publics on the TikTok Platform', *New Media & Society*, 24(1): 1-19.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Word Frequency Table

Word	Count	Similar Words
fucks	127	fuck, fucked, fucking, fucks
man	87	man
people	77	people
money	75	money
men	71	men, mens
right	69	right
now	59	now
one	56	one, ones
coming	50	come, comes, coming
yeah	50	yeah
life	49	life, lifes
women	49	'women, women
gives	49	give, gives, giving
times	48	time, times
way	48	way, ways
got	46	got
work	44	work, worked, working, works
feel	43	feel, feeling, feelings
looking	40	'look, look, looked, looking, looks
believe	40	believe, believed, believes, believing
sit	38	sit, sitting
never	38	never
world	38	world
girls	37	girl, girls
even	36	even
woman	36	woman
let	36	let, letting
tell	34	tell, telling
year	32	year, years
good	32	good, goodness, goods
start	32	start, started, starts

rich	32	rich
shit	32	shit
something	32	something
guys	31	guy, guys
talk	30	talk, talked, talking, talks
live	30	live, lived, lives, living
person	28	person, personal, personally
idea	28	idea, ideas
day	28	day, days
really	28	really
law	27	law, laws
taking	27	take, takes, taking
saying	26	saying, says'
every	26	every
find	25	find, finding
bitch	25	bitch, bitches
around	25	around
love	25	love, loved, loves
female	24	female, females

Appendix 2: Data Set

	Title	Hashtags	Secs	Transcript
1	Andrew Tate Opinion on Military	#andrewtate #fyp #foryou #motivation	33	V1.docx
2	A day in the life of Andrew Tate	#andrewtate #success	33	V2.docx
3	Andrew Tate Most Controversial Opinions	#andrewtate #fyp #trending #controversial #tate	59	V3.docx
4	Episode 6	#tate #fyp #andrewtate	49	V4.docx
5	(unnamed)	#andrewtate #motivación #academiawallstreet	152	V5.docx
6	Wishful thinking gives you a goal but action is the thing that makes you achieve it	#econimicstateoftheworld #money #oscarsAtHome #india #livinglike a boss	42	V6.docx
7	Tate is a genuinely good guy	#andrewtate #tate #sigma #sigmagrindset #based #w #alpha #andrew #tatebrothers #truth #finalstatement	129	V7.docx
8	Tate on how much money you need to be rich	#crypto #tate #andrewtate #rich #fy #fyp #fyp:) #fypage	60	V8.docx
9	most important things in life	#oscarsathome #xtzbca #andrewtate #money #millionare #advice #rich	124	V9.docx
10	See the world for what it is	#andrewtate #money #millionaire #advice #OscarsAtHome #rich #econimicstateoftheworld #inspirational	143	V10.docx
11	Andrew Tate, sobre el Poder de la Hermandad	#andrewtate #tate #andrewtateespañol #poder #hermandad	27	V11.docx
12	(pray emoji)	#fyp #viral #tate #andrewtate #illuminati	59	V12.docx
13	Andrew tate about net worth	#tate #andrewtate #money #networth #gain #rich	57	V13.docx
14	(unnamed)		50	V14.docx
15	Scarecity=value	#andrewtate #fyp #popular #oscarsathome #dating advice #millionare #india	41	V15.docx
16	Become the king in your household	#andrewtate #fyp #popular #millionaire #money #india	63	V16.docx
17	How to pick up girls	#fyp #popular #women #datingadvice #dating	37	V17.docx
18	Why #andrewtate lives in Romania	#fellaspodcast	89	V18.docx
19	Mentality (money and crown emoji)	#fyp #popular #millionare #oscarsathome	34	V19.docx
20	Honestly (laughing emoji)	#andrewtate #fyp #popular #millionare #oscarsathome #datingadvice #dating #women	52	V20.docx
21	(unnamed)	#fyp #andrew #tate #andrewtate #goodbye	85	V21.docx

22	(unnamed)		43	V22.docx
23	Saying STFU to your 3 year old son is wild!	#andrewtate #son #daughter #freshandfit #sneako #wild #wow #toxic #problematic	42	V23.docx
24	(unnamed)	#tate #patrickbetdavid #motivate #treatpeoplewithrespect	72	V24.docx
25	Tate on vaping	#fyp #for youpage #foryou #tate #vape #vaping #chinese	58	V25.docx
26	(unnamed)		28	V26.docx
27	TATE- Every man NEEDS to hear this	#tate #motivation #masculinity #foryou #fyp	25	V27.docx
28	Andrew Tate refuses to be in a sexless relationship	#fyp #relationship #tate #podcast	42	V28.docx
29	(Unnamed)	#fyp tate #andrewtate #islam	33	V29.docx
30	(unnamed)	#WOMEN #fyp #mindset #rich #richlife #adrewtate #interview #tate	50	V30.docx
31	All the beautiful women	#tate	36	V31.docx
32	SLEEP (sleep emoji)	#tate #sleep #mindset	41	V32.docx
33	Tate is scared	#f #fy #fyp #tate #andrewtate #for	26	V33.docx
34	Episode 3: Replying to squishyvenus984 ur still gonna find a way to say he never said these things tho aren't you xxx	#fyp #andrewtate #tate #misognyny #misogynistic #feminism	22	V34.docx
35	Don't let your feelings play you	#motivation #tate #tristan #a #tate #tatebrothers #warroom #hustler #hu #quite #feelings #love	19	V35.docx
36	ES Tiempo de ser excepcional	#andrewtate #tate #español #inspitacion #inspiracionsubtitulada #gym #motivacion #hombres #fuerte #mexico #expaña #parati	60	V36.docx
37	Episode 11: Why working a 9-5 Won't Make You Rich Quickly	#andrewtate #tate #motivation #money #fyp #fyp:) #xyzbca	61	V37.docx
38	(unnamed)	#tate	50	V38.docx
39	Simply another Top G W! (winky face)	#andrewtate #tate #foryoupage	16	V39.docx
40	(unnamed)		21	V40.docx
41	Andrew Tates opinion on sparkling water!	#andrewtate #hu2 #money #rich	25	V41.docx
42	(unnamed)	#andrewtate #motivation #lowe #relationship #feelings #emotions #hustle #believe #fyp:) #fyp #tatebrothers #xzybca	42	V42.docx
43	Tate on Islam (Moon emoji)	#tate #andrewtate #tatebrothers #hustlersuniversity #rich	47	V43.docx

		#money #islam #region #masculinity #tristantate #nelkboys #nelk #truthmindset		
44	Andrew Tate Vs Hater !!	#sigma #tate #andrewtate #hustlersuniversity #hustler #business #inspiration #HU #tristantate	39	V44.docx
45	Tate revealed how he become a Millionaire	#andrewtate #tate #mafia #easterneuropean #business #businesstiktok #motivation #moneymakingtips #investing #millionairemindsmore	147	V45.docx
46	Wow vc @merryweathergtav	#tryorbme #_leachy #gtaonline #gtachoppa #andrewtate	47	V46.docx
47	#Andrewtate Grilling episode out Sunday 26th at 6:30 on the youtube channel (laughing emoji) @chianreynolds its not one to miss… (hands over face)	#Grillingonstandout	37	V47.docx
48	Tate showing how to be a player pt 1	#fyp #tate #andrewtate	74	V48.docx
49	TATE USES PHYSICS TO GET GIRLS !! (planet emoji)	#signma #tate #andrewtate #hustlersuniversity #hustler #business #inspiration	50	V49.docx
50	He's a nice person	#fyp #andrewtate #tate #misognyny #misogynistic #feminism	29	V50.docx
51	(unnamed)		143	V51.docx
52	(unnamed)		52	V52.docx
53	Watch till the end…	#andrewtate #millionaire #hustle #grind	186	V53.docx
54	Let's see if this blows up	#fyp #foryou #viral #trending #edit #andrewtate #ismailxbosna #xyzbca	22	V54.docx
55	(unnamed)	#andrewtate #adinross	72	V55.docx
56	Episode 2		13	V56.docx
57	#andrewtate hates breakfast	#fellaspodcast	53	V57.docx
58	Episode 2	#jakepaul #ksi #loganpaul #impaulsive #jakepaulboxing #andrewtate #sidemen	85	V58.docx
59	BFFs try to call Tate sexist (eyebrow raised emoji)	#andrewtate #fyp #foryou #viral	58	V59.docx
60	If you are thinking about suicide just remember that there are people that will be there for you	#stopsuicide #andrewtate #hustlersuniversity #fyp #help #<3	71	V60.docx
61	(unnamed)	#fyp #motivationalquotes #motivaltional #andrewtate	66	V61.docx
62	What colour is your bugatti?	#andrewtate #topgmentality #wealth #multimillionaire #bugatti	28	V62.docx

63	Episode 30 Is social media depressing?	#andrewtate #socialmedia #mindset #mma #hardwork #hustle #motivation #motivate	43	V63.docx
64	Female Self-Defense Part 3	#foryou #fyp #andrewtate #selfdefense #fighting	66	V64.docx
65	Follow for more (crown emoji)	#tate #cobra #fyp:) #xyzbca #andrew #top	78	V65.docx
66	KFC>McDonald's	#tate #hustlersuniversity #kfc #mcdonalds	32	V66.docx
67	Who's better Tate or Rambo?	#rambo #tate #tatevsrambo #itson #hero #actionmovie	41	V67.docx
68	Story time in Moldova (moldovan flag)	#fyp #viral #tate #moldova #podcast	49	V68.docx
69	How many u got?	#hustlersuniversity #tate #fy #xyzbca #viral	56	V69.docx
70	Its weird	#hustlersuniversity #fy #	30	V70.docx
71	(unnamed)		126	V71.docx
72	You are weak	#weak #success #tate #trending #viral #viralvideo #viraltiktok #weakmen #trendingsons	84	V72.docx
73	Tate on value!!	#motivation #money	23	V73.docx
74	Andrew Tate on Mental Health	#andrewtate #MentalHealth	98	V74.docx
75	Tate's opinion on Trump	*#andrewtate #putin* #fy #fyp #fyp:) #viral #blowthisup #tate #slovakia	34	V75.docx
76	Would you guys f*ck around with other women?	#andrewtate #podcast #fy #fyp #fyp:) #slovakia #czech #viral #blowthisup	17	V76.docx
77	(unnamed)	#fyp #trending #viral #andrewtate #toxicbashers	58	V77.docx
78	How are you having fun?	#andrewtate #hustlersuniversity #makemoney #fyp #foryou #viral #getrich #mindset #foryoupage #value	27	V78.docx
79	Andrew Tate on belief and power. Follow for best self help clips!	#tate #andrewtate #power #men #motivation #selfhelp #ghosts	61	V79.docx
80	(unnamed)	#andrewtate #podcast	101	V80.docx
81	(unnamed)	#therealworld #andrewtate #tate #meaning #love #relationship #bradleymartyn	55	V81.docx
82	Reasin [*misspelt reason*] why tate finds younger girls more attractive	#fyp #youth #girls #tate	37	V82.docx
83	Women don't care if men cheat!	#fyp #tate #men #cheating #alpha #nelkboys	83	V83.docx
84	(unnamed)		69	V84.docx
85	A Role of A Women by Andrew Tate	#andrewtate #masculinity #facts #mens #women #relatablequotes	46	V85.docx

86	Andrew Tate on Masculinity	#andrew tate #tate #andrew #rizz #dating #girls #getgirls #bestrizz #bestandrewtateclips #tateclips	28	V86.docx
87	Abdrew [*misspelt Andrew*] Tate speech	Relationship #andrewtate #viral #tendence	36	V87.docx
88	(unnamed)		33	V88.docx
89	Message for young men by Andrew Tatte	#andrewtatte #men #eisdom #life #quote	39	V89.docx
90	(unnamed)		20	V90.docx
91	(unnamed)		35	V91.docx
92	(unnamed)	#T8brothers #Andrew #motivation #inspiration #t8 #gym #facts	15	V92.docx
93	(unnamed)		22	V93.docx
94	Andrew tate predicted he'll be arrested	#tate #tristiantate	46	V94.docx
95	Andrew Tate about London nowadays		35	V95.docx
96	(unnamed)		23	V96.docx
97	'Blame and praise have no true effects'	#andrew #andrewtatte	60	V97.docx
98	(unnamed)		29	V98.docx
99	(unnamed)		38	V99.docx
100	(unnamed)		55	V100.docx