Investigating the Tate-riarchy: Patriarchy for Profit in 'The Real World'

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I declare that the research contained herein was granted approval by the SPAIS Ethics Working Group.

<u>Dedication</u>

Annie Banks – I am so lucky to have you. Here's to graduation! x

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Abstract

Though a relatively recent phenomenon, there is now a substantive literature concerned with the online manosphere – the loose confederation of groups that revolve around masculinity, men's rights, and the perceived constraints upon these. Highly visible in the manosphere is Andrew Tate, a self-proclaimed misogynist, and the most prolific purveyor of masculinity-related content online. While scholarship has begun to explore Tate's vast cultural traction, this project investigates a facet of Tate's online ecosystem that is currently underexplored: The Real World. To uncover what The Real World is, this project identifies and interrogates the core ideas promoted by the subscription-based platform. This project also explores how these ideas are sold to Tate's predominantly male audiences. This project conducts a visual, discourse, and textual analysis of purposefully derived data from The Real World. The analysis focuses on The Real World's websites and domains on the social media platform, X. A gender lens is utilised to inform the analysis, guided by a framework of intersectionality. An in-depth exploration of the platform's content reveals that The Real World is a masked attempt to commodify hegemonic masculinity and reproduce patriarchal hierarchies. By reinforcing the elevated status of hegemonic masculinity over all others, The Real World works to subordinate women, gender-diverse people, and non-hegemonic men. Yet, a conspiratorial narrative and discourse of male self-actualisation and success are strategically invoked to conceal The Real World's patriarchal logics, and to enable these to be taken up more easily by boys and young men. These narratives, deployed by The Real World, pathologize feminism and those who leverage criticism against Andrew Tate. This allows Tate to continuously extract from those engaged with The Real World, while maintaining a hegemonic position in the patriarchal hierarchy. The findings of this project extend current understandings of Tate's presence in the manosphere, highlighting the more subtle, yet insidious, ways in which his patriarchal ideologies are disseminated for profit in the online sphere.

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Introduction

In March 2025, Netflix launched the hit 'Adolescence', a four-part drama centred on the complex interplay between online misogyny, masculinity, and violence against women and girls (Thorne, 2025). Branded as a 'vital call to action', the series sparked national concern and brought the concept of the 'manosphere' into sharp relief (Hogan, 2025: np). Though the manosphere is now highly visible in public discourse, for feminist scholars, these concerns are not new. As imagined by Farrell et al. (2019: pg.1), the 'manosphere', refers to the 'group of loosely incorporated websites and social media communities where men's perspectives, needs, gripes, frustrations and desires are explicitly explored'. Within feminist scholarship, inhabitants of these online 'groups' have received considerable academic attention, most notably for their endorsement of extreme misogyny and association with high-profile, violent events (e.g., Baele et al., 2023; Ging, 2019; Weaver and Morris, 2021; Vink et al., 2023). Recently dominating this online milieu are the so-called 'manfluencers' – that is, those social media personalities who produce and profit from the dissemination of masculinity-related online (Roberts et al., 2025: pg.1). Foremost among these is Andrew Tate.

Andrew Tate is a self-styled misogynist, whose assertions range from 'women cannot drive' (Das, 2022a: np) to descriptions of how he would attack a woman with a machete if she were to accuse him of infidelity (Copland, 2022: pg.101). Amid the #MeToo movement, Tate infamously took to Twitter, proclaiming that victims of rape must 'bear some responsibility' for their sexual assaults (Hope not Hate, 2024: np). Resultantly, Tate was banned from most mainstream social media platforms, and at the time of writing, is faced with charges of rape, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, money laundering, and operating an organised crime group exploiting women (Kwai, 2025). Nevertheless, Tate's content remains highly visible, and he retains a large following online. For instance, Tate hosts over 11 million followers on the social media site X, while on TikTok, repackaged videos connected by the #Tate hashtag were viewed over 13 billion times in 2023 (Oppenheim, 2023), effectively nullifying the platform's attempt to de-platform him. Significantly, in January 2025, Tate took to social media to announce the launch of his UK political party, BRUV (Cockerell, 2025).

Tate has used the attention garnered from his controversial online presence to build an online business empire. In 2021, Andrew Tate set up Hustlers University, a paid online program offering financial courses developed by Tate and those that Tate claims to be financial gurus. Tate marketed Hustler's University as an online school that teaches people how to make 'thousands of pounds' (Das, 2022b: para.2). By 2022, the program had amassed over 127,000 members (Das, 2022b), recruiting men and boys as young as thirteen years old (Hume, 2024; Smith et al., 2025). In August 2022, shortly after Tate was widely de-platformed online, the Hustler's University app was removed from the Apple and Google app stores and eventually shut down (Magee, 2023). However, Tate announced the launch of his revived and re-branded university 'The Real World' in October 2022 (Hume, 2024). The Real World functions similarly to Hustler's University. For $49.99 per month, The Real World claims to offer members access to '18 modern wealth creation methods' and a Discord server with Tate (The Real World, 2025a: np). According to the websites, these wealth creation methods are taught by 'millionaire professors', who are 'hand-picked' by Tate (The Real World, 2025a: np). Their expertise, it is claimed, spans a range of fields including e-commerce, copywriting, stock trading, cryptocurrency investment, content creation, and artificial intelligence (The Real World, 2025a). In addition, the platform grants members access to a health and fitness campus, purportedly curated by Tate's personal trainer (The Real World, 2025a). Despite ongoing controversies surrounding Tate, The Real World continues to operate online, hosting up to 800,000 users and generating Tate around $5.56 million per month (Parker, 2025: np).

Despite its popularity, there is a dearth of literature engaging with The Real World. This is puzzling, considering that Tate's persona as an alleged business entrepreneur enables him to garner a positive reputation, particularly among young men. For instance, 69 percent of men aged 16-25 years describe Tate as 'successful', while 31 percent see him as a 'role model' (Hansom, 2023: para.9). Further, while longitudinal data on Tate's influence is lacking, correlational research suggests that male engagement with the manosphere are associated with the development of misogynistic attitudes and behaviour (Milne et al., 2024).

Given the harmful impact of Tate´s views, and the lack of scholarly engagement with his new platform, this project poses the question: What is The Real World? Specifically, this dissertation employs a gender lens, guided by intersectionality, to explore the ideas promoted by The Real World, and to analyse how Tate promotes these ideas.

This project is henceforth divided into five chapters. Following a summary of the existing literature and a comprehensive review of the project´s methodologies, the project outlines the theoretical framework used to answer the question, what is The Real World? Next, the project looks at the version of success sold by The Real World, examining the economic, physical, and sexual imperatives constructed as necessary for success. Finally, the project explores the notion of 'the matrix' as a bifurcated tool that upholds Tate's hegemonic status, while recruiting boys and men to engage in the (re)production of patriarchy. The project concludes that The Real World is a masked attempt to commodify hegemonic masculinity and reinforce patriarchal hierarchies. Indeed, what Tate is 'selling' on The Real World is a hegemonic masculinity, wrapped in a discourse of self-improvement and conspiratorial narrative, which allows for, and scaffolds, more overt expressions of misogyny, hetero-sexism, and antifeminism.

Literature Review

Popularised by feminists and gender scholars, the 'manosphere' refers to an assemblage of 'loosely incorporated websites and social media communities where men's perspectives, needs, gripes, frustrations and desires are explicitly explored' (Farrell et al., 2019: pg.1). Over recent years, the manosphere has expanded in both visibility and influence (Copland, 2022). Largely, this is because social media algorithms amplify polarising and extreme content, in a manner that is highly accessible to audiences (Saurwein and Spencer-Smith, 2021). These algorithms have assisted the manosphere's expansion from insular online communities, such as those on Reddit, into more mainstream platforms, such as X (Smith et al., 2025). At the same time, various sub-groups have emerged within the manosphere. Among these are involuntary celibates, colloquially termed 'incels', men's rights activists,

pick up artists (Ging, 2019), and most recently, 'manfluencers' (Roberts et al., 2025: pg.1). These assemblages, while differing in their aims and organisational structures, largely unite around masculinity, anti-feminist, and misogynistic discourses (Copland, 2022; Ging, 2019).

According to the literature, a key discourse in the manosphere is the 'matrix' metaphor (e.g., Ging, 2019; Vallerga and Zubriggen, 2022; Van Veeren et al., forthcoming 2025). The matrix refers to both the 1999 film 'The Matrix', and the idea that an oppressive simulation controls society (Vallerga and Zubriggen, 2022). According to Van Veeren et al. (forthcoming 2025), this metaphor has been co-opted by the manosphere as an allegory of enslavement and freedom, which positions feminism as a form of male enslavement. The matrix metaphor is employed to advance several tropes in the manosphere, including the claim that women frequently and vindictively falsely accuse men of rape (Banet-Weiser, 2021; Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2015), and that there is a modern gynocracy which oppresses men (Vallerga and Zubriggen, 2022). Within this discourse, taking the 'red pill' refers to escaping enslavement to the matrix by 'waking up' (Van Vereen et al., 2025: pg.2). Those who claim to be 'awakened' to the matrix have been associated with disseminating misogynistic myths. Among these is the '80/20 rule', which purports that 80 percent of women select from just 20 percent of the male dating pool, focusing on the most attractive and/or wealthiest (Cottee, 2020: pg.6). Though they are largely disseminated online, these conspiratorial imageries and logics have been linked to real-life acts of violence and harassment, predominantly against women and girls (e.g., Copland, 2023; Weaver and Morris, 2021).

Notwithstanding the (il)logics which unite the manosphere, the literature highlights heterogeneity between groups, which demands careful examination. For instance, in their study of men's rights activists, Maloney et al. (2024: pg.15) found the 'coexistence of good, bad, and indifferent masculine practices', despite their shared antifeminist rhetoric. Likewise, while much of the literature on incels provides a picture of extreme misogyny and an endorsement of violence (Cottee, 2020; Ging, 2019), recent scholarship indicates that some incel platforms are used as spaces for internal resistance and de-radicalisation from misogynistic ideologies (Thorburn, 2023). Taken together, these contributions

demonstrate that understanding the manosphere necessitates a nuanced examination of the specific protagonists and inhabitants operating in this sphere.

Granted, an expanding body of literature has explored the role of 'manfluencers' in disseminating antifeminist discourses (Lafrance et al., 2025), misogynistic attitudes (Renström and Bäck, 2024), and influencing boys' behaviour and attitudes towards women and girls (Roberts and Wescott, 2024). Notably, Andrew Tate has now been recognised as the most 'prolific' manfluencer (Roberts et al., 2025: pg.1), sparking journalistic and academic investigation into his content and its influence. For instance, several journalistic commentaries have cautioned against Tate's harmful influence, particularly among boys from marginalised socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g., Day, 2025; Hill, 2025). Scholars have also examined Tate's discourses, focusing specifically on how these appeal to boys and young men (Thomas-Parr and Gilroy-Ware, 2025; Smith et al., 2025). For example, in a study involving interviews with schoolteachers in Australia, Roberts and Wescott (2024) found that sexism among young boys was, at least partially, influenced by Tate's content. Furthermore, varying degrees of receptiveness to Tate's ideologies have been identified among adults in Romania (Doiciar and Cretan, 2025) and teenage boys in the UK (Haslop et al., 2024).

While these studies have contributed to academic understanding of Tate and his appeal among young men, such engagements have focused predominantly on his short-form or viral content, on platforms such as TikTok (Haslop et al., 2024; Thomas-Parr and Gilroy-Ware, 2025) and YouTube (Smith et al., 2025). These are worthy analyses, given that Tate's clickbait-style videos are bolstered by social media algorithms and, therefore, tend to attract the most views and amplify his most inflammatory statements (Roberts et al., 2025). Nonetheless, these clips represent only a fraction of Tate's content. As such, it is unlikely that these videos are the only material in which Tate's core and captive audiences are actively engaged. Rather, journalistic commentaries have reported that Tate's YouTube and TikTok videos act as a gateway into Tate's broader ecosystem, such as The Real World, where followers are encouraged to engage more deeply– and financially– with Tate's teachings and worldviews (Feltham, 2024; Hume, 2024). In this context, an in-depth exploration of The Real World is imperative. Indeed, a refined

understanding of The Real World is necessary to truly understand Tate's ideologies and appeal, and to open possibilities for these perspectives to be effectively ameliorated and/or challenged. Though recent scholarship has urged examination of The Real World (Smith et al., 2025), within the literature, this enterprise remains seldom explored. To address this research gap, this project proposes the research question: What is The Real World?

Methodology

This project aims to provide a critical analysis of the core tenets of Andrew Tate's alleged business platform, The Real World. For the analysis, data were gathered from The Real World's online websites: therealworld.net (The Real World, 2025a) and therealworldportal.com (The Real World, 2025b). Although Tate's clickbait-style videos have proliferated on social media platforms such as TikTok, analysing the content of The Real World's websites offers some distinct advantages. Indeed, social media algorithms drive clips of Tate's content towards passive viewers, reaching much larger audiences than those who intentionally seek it out (Baker et al., 2024). In contrast, the core, unfiltered, and unedited messaging of Tate's websites– including The Real World– represents material that is more likely to have been purposefully sought out (Roberts et al., 2025). To be exposed to The Real World's website material, for instance, one must actively search for, follow, and/or subscribe to such content. Moreover, the lack of content moderation on The Real World's websites, compared to social media platforms such as TikTok, means that the material collected represents Tate's unmoderated ideology (Das, 2022a). Resultantly, the purposefully sampled data in this dissertation is likely to be that which is engaged in by Tate's more ardent following.

To supplement the analyses, this dissertation collected data from The Real World's profiles on X. These pages include @JoinTRW_, @The Real World_Tate, @EducationTRW and @HU_TheRealWorld. While Tate was banned from Twitter in 2017, Elon Musk reinstated Tate's accounts when he bought the platform in 2022 (Williams, 2024). Currently, Tate uses X to promote his business ventures

separately from his own page, '@cobratate' (Smith et al., 2025). Given that X is a rather unrestrictive social media site (Williams, 2024), the content on The Real World's profiles can be considered similarly reflective of Tate's unfiltered ideologies. Analysing The Real World's online presence through these different media enriches the analysis, as it allows for an understanding of how Tate presents and sells The Real World to his audiences in ostensibly distinct spaces. Indeed, X is known for thriving on 'simplification and emotionality' (Bergmann, 2020: pg.332), and fostering polarised communities, which give rise to conspiracy theories (Williams, 2024). Therefore, while the websites are directed toward Tate's core audiences, X offers Tate a critical space to engage audiences and recruit new members of The Real World.

Behind the paywall, The Real World offers its members access to a Discord server, where users can privately communicate and receive messages from Tate (The Real World, 2025a: np). This project, however, focuses solely on publicly available material, to ensure researcher safety and so as not to encounter the ethical problem of observing participants without consent. Moreover, to ensure that this project fulfils ethical considerations, the social media commentary analysed was filtered through rigorous scrutiny. This ensured that the data was collected from the official The Real World platforms, which have made their posts publicly available and consented to the terms and conditions of X.

To answer the research question, what is The Real World? a discourse, text, and visual analysis of The Real World material was conducted. Namely, the analyses examined the core ideas promoted by The Real World, and how these are sold. Indeed, an exploration of the platform's key ideologies is imperative to uncover the overt and covert ways in which gender is prescribed, performed, and given political meaning on The Real World (Butler, 1988). Following Braun and Clarke (2006), the dominant themes in the data were identified, coded, and organised thematically. The data (including website images, slogans, promotional videos, publicly available interviews on The Real World's website, and publicly available posts on The Real World's X accounts) were drawn upon because present within these materials are the overt and covert ways in which The Real World constructs gender as a binary and a hierarchy (Carver and Lyddon, 2022). For instance, images and visual representations have the

power to construct specific visions of gender and provide perspectives on the social world (Ong, 2020).

Furthermore, this project conducted a discourse analysis, to examine how Tate employs rhetoric on The

Real World as a tool of persuasion, to legitimise his worldviews (Martin, 2013).

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Gender Lens

To understand the ideas promoted by The Real World, and how Tate promotes these ideas, this project adopts a gender lens, informed by intersectionality. Derived from feminist theorising, a gender lens is a valuable concept for revealing the overt and covert ways in which gender oppression is scaffolded. Indeed, by exposing the inherent valuing of traits and phenomena coded as masculine in society, a gender lens reveals where and how patriarchy occurs (Enloe, 2014). Similarly, intersectional considerations are necessary to demonstrate how, in the experience of individuals, oppressions and privileges are not experienced separately but rather in inextricable conjunctions (hooks, 1981). As illustrated by contemporary intersectional feminists, these oppressions and/or privileges can be shaped by interlocking social positions, including one's gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, dis/ability and/or social class (Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1981).

A gender lens challenges the sex-gender relationship that has typically been presumed. As theorised by Butler (1988), masculinity and femininity are arbitrary codes that are projected onto bodies, which are then binarized into males and females. The ways in which males and females interpret and perform these codes reflect and reinforce what is widely understood as gender (Butler, 1988). However, as noted by Carver and Lyddon (2022), these codes are socially ordered in a hierarchy whereby masculinity/maleness is more highly valued, and therefore accrues more power than femininity/femaleness. Subsequently, gender must be understood as not just a binary of men and women, but a 'hierarchy of masculinities over femininities, and some men over others' (Carver and Lyddon, 2022: pg.1-2). The systemic privileging of masculinity, and the exclusionary knock-on effects of this order, are what feminists conceptualise as 'patriarchy' (Enloe, 2014).

Resultantly, it is only through a gender lens that the workings of the patriarchy can be truly exposed. A gender lens, for instance, illuminates how masculinity is often associated with 'positive' traits, such as strength, independence, assertion, toughness, and control (Carver and Lyddon, 2022). Femininity, on

the other hand, is characterised in opposition to what is masculine, and is thereby associated with weakness, dependence, naivety, emotionality, and unpredictability (Peterson and Runyan, 2015: pg.58). While all men benefit from the privileging of masculinity in society, women who engage in characteristics that are designed as masculine are often faced with stigma or marginalisation (Connell and Pearse, 2014). This is because women who perform traits coded as masculine challenge the accepted norms of femininity, and thereby threaten the dominant patriarchal order (Shippers, 2007). Likewise, gender-diverse people are subordinated by the patriarchal privileging of masculinity, which renders gender-nonconforming experiences as an unintelligible 'other' (Jackson, 1999: pg.163). In a patriarchal society, for instance, gender non-conforming individuals may face exclusion or sanctions for both encroaching on traditional male territory and for deviating from normative feminine ideals (Briggs and George, 2023). Hence, patriarchy delegates rewards based on how convincingly one can perform masculinity, with the assumption that women and gender-diverse people can never perform masculinity to the degree of heterosexual, cis-gender men (Jackson, 2006).

Though masculinity is privileged under patriarchy, masculinity itself is not a homogenous or fixed concept. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: pg.20), masculinities are multiple, relational, and hierarchical. Nonetheless, critical studies of men and masculinities have concurred that central to the definition of what it means to 'be a man' is 'to not be a woman' (Berdahl et al., 2018: pg.426). This ideology becomes the means by and through which men subordinate women, while some men subordinate others. As such, the gender order creates 'nested' hierarchies within masculinity itself (Carver and Lyddon, 2022: pg.2).

At the summit of this hierarchy, according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: pg.832), is hegemonic masculinity; that is, the 'most honoured' way of being a man. Hegemonic masculinity is a useful framework for understanding patriarchal hierarchies. In contemporary societies, hegemonic masculinity defines the most dominant and socially prized form of masculinity to which individual men can aspire. It is 'the form that is not only revered when enacted by individual men, but most effective in maintaining

power and privilege for men who enact it collectively' (Schwalbe, 2015: pg.31-32). Importantly, hegemonic masculinities are culturally dependent and subject to change across time and place (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Nonetheless, in Western cultures, scholars argue that the prevailing hegemonic masculine ideal for men is to be rich, white, heterosexual, professionally successful, physically strong, and emotionally tough (Berdahl et al., 2018). It is by valorising these masculinised traits that hegemonic masculinity establishes hierarchies both across and within the gender binary. Indeed, the elevated status of hegemonic masculinity necessarily entails the subordination of femininities and non-hegemonic masculinities (Berdahl et al., 2018; Schippers, 2007), producing hierarchies between women and men, and between men themselves. For instance, because hegemonic masculinity is necessarily heterosexual, non-heterosexual men are feminised, and therefore subject to marginalisation, under patriarchy (Jackson, 2006). In this sense, hegemonic masculinity not only legitimises patriarchy (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), but also heteronormativity – that is, the normative status of heterosexuality that maintains hegemonic male domination (Jackson, 1999, 2006).

Even if very few men enact and embody all aspects of hegemonic masculinity, the idealisation of hegemonic masculinity makes these dimensions widely normative (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Subsequently, men experience domination and/or subordination depending on the extent to which they ascribe to the dominant ideals (Pascoe and Bridges, 2016). Men who meet hegemonic standards are rewarded with higher status and power (Berdahl et al., 2018). Meanwhile, those men who cannot or do not want to meet its requirements may engage in some dimensions of hegemonic masculinity in how they act, such as maintaining financial ambitions (Pascoe and Bridges, 2016). Nonetheless, alongside women, men who fail to completely measure up to hegemonic ideals undergo marginalisation through feminisation (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014). The subordination of non-hegemonic men, women, and gender-diverse people in society is how patriarchy occurs. Significantly, it is only when gender is recognised as both a binary and a hierarchy that the explicit, and more subtle, workings of patriarchy can be exposed.

It has been widely acknowledged that hegemonic masculinity imposes rigid norms and behavioural expectations on boys and men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Harrington, 2020). Resultantly, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been conflated with the term 'toxic masculinity', to refer to masculine traits that are perceived as harmful to society and men themselves (Copland, 2022: pg.102). While aspects of hegemonic masculinity may be considered 'toxic', hegemonic masculinities are often obscured as the 'real' masculinity, and are associated with positive traits such as self-actualisation and success (Heilman and Barker, 2019: pg.7). A gender lens, crucially, reveals how success is constructed in ways which justify the elevation of hegemonic men and the subordination of non-hegemonic others. Moreover, a gender lens informed by intersectionality uncovers how the rhetoric of real versus toxic masculinities is often racialised, classed, and otherwise discriminatory (Harrington, 2020). For instance, excluding subordinate race and class groups from being 'real' men provides a legitimising rationale for their social subordination (Reid, 2018). As a result, marginalised groups are more likely to be considered toxic (Harrington, 2020).

Finally, patriarchy allows for male-dominated societies and oppressive institutions to present themselves as gender-neutral (Carver and Lyddon, 2022). In part, this is because the structures and ideologies which elevate hegemonic masculinity are subtle and continuously modernised (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). A gender lens, however, seeks to uncover where, and how, patriarchy is (re)produced (Carver and Lyddon, 2022). In this context, it is imperative to examine The Real World through a gender lens. It is only when this framework is applied that one can reveal how, in ostensibly gender-neutral arenas, hegemonic masculinity is performed and prescribed in ways which can, and do, reproduce patriarchy.

Chapter 2: The Commodification of 'Success' in The Real World

In order to uncover what The Real World is, it is first necessary to examine what is being 'sold' by the platform, and how. The overarching promise for audiences of The Real World is the attainment of success, as highlighted by the platform's assertion:

'*With your effort and our guidance, success is within reach' (The Real World, 2025a: np).*

This project argues that The Real World constructs 'success' in a way which necessitates specific economic, physical, and sexual imperatives. Taken together, these ideals enable The Real World to promote, and commodify, a version of success that is consanguine with the construction of hegemonic masculinity.
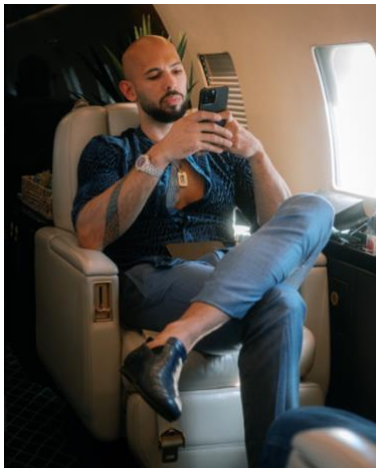
Economic Success

Figure 1 Screenshot of Andrew Tate on a private jet, posted by The Real World on X.

Figure 2 Screenshot of Andrew Tate sat on a sports car, taken from The Real World's website.

Figure 3 Screenshot of Andrew Tate from the 'You have two choices' video on The Real World's website.

Foremost, The Real World constructs success in alignment with economic prosperity, a core element of hegemonic masculinity. According to Henry and Flynn (2019: pg.1946), hegemonic masculinity, particularly in the West, necessitates the performance of capitalist accumulation and financial dominance. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that The Real World idealises entrepreneurialism and an indulgent, hedonistic lifestyle. As Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 illustrate, The Real World centralises motifs

of sportscars, yachts, private jets, and ostentatious houses; much of this imagery is innately bound up with the image of Tate himself, acting as the focal point for the surrounding affluence. For example, Tate's appearance on The Real World is near-uniform; as Figures 1,2, 3, and 4 suggest, Tate frequently sports black-out sunglasses with a gold rim, large, expensive-looking watches, and designer clothing. In this sense, Tate portrays the ideal 'marketplace man' (Kimmel, 1994: pg.61) – his identity is reliant on the performance of economic success and capitalist extravagance.

This version of success is strongly and neoliberally hyper-capitalist. The Real World (2025a: para.1, para.5) dedicates a whole segment labelled 'About Andrew', which references Tate's humble beginnings in Luton, and his alleged transition to one of 'the business world's elite'. Tate's flagrant displays of wealth and consumerism are attributed to his 'savvy' entrepreneurialism, and 'relentless' spirit (The Real World, 2025a; para. 4), which speaks to the 'individual hero narrative of capitalism' (Horton, 2022: pg.62). Discursively, this framing positions Tate as a superior, and paints his lifestyle as highly aspirational for boys and men. This links strongly to Horowitz's (1998) conceptualisation of modern masculinity. According to Horowitz, middle and upper-class representations of masculinity changed in the 20th century, with materialism and image becoming key indicators of masculinity (Horowitz, 1998: pg.134). In 'Be a Man – Buy a Car!', Duerringer (2015) illustrates how masculinity can almost be bought when you purchase a certain type of car. As a result, the motifs of cars, jets, watches, and yachts in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 can be interpreted as allowing Tate to perform richness and masculinity in tandem, ultimately conflating the two. In this sense, The Real World urges boys and men to achieve a certain economic status and then demonstrate it through the purchase of luxury items. However, this must be accomplished according to a hypermasculine and sharply neoliberal ethos.

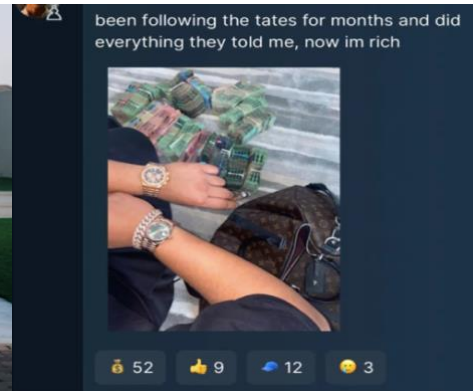*Figure 4 Screenshot of Andrew Tate taken from The Real World Tate on X, captioned 'What color is your Pagani?'*

Figure 5 Image from the 'Features' sub-page of The Real World.

Moreover, The Real World promotes an idea of success which entangles economic accumulation and personal freedom. Specifically, wealth is conflated with social, or 'liquid', power (Roberts et al., 2025: pg.11). Notably, Tate frequently appears smoking a cigar in unconventional settings, such as on private jets, conjuring up an image that economic capital allows one to subvert the traditional societal norms to which most people are subject. This is further captured in Tate's ominous warning that 'the sharks are coming, men like me, men like Elon' (The Real World, 2025a: np), referring to the trillionaire, Elon Musk. These visual and discursive cues summon the idea that hyper-capitalist success, presumably attainable through The Real World, offers entry to a social elite who possess great power and influence. This narrative is reaffirmed by the 'Features' section of the website (see Figure 5), which includes photos of screenshots that alleged members have submitted, underneath the caption 'Our Students are Levelling Up' (The Real World, 2025a: np).

As shown in Figure 5, the featured boys and men attribute their social and romantic success to the materialistic gains acquired by participating in The Real World. In these images, men and boys describe how much money they have earned, the Rolex watches they have bought, the holidays they have taken, flights in first-class, fancy cars, private jets, and other expensive purchases that mark status and wealth, attributing these to The Real World's money-earning tricks. This section allows The Real World to appeal directly to Tate's audience, by presenting its members' lifestyles as highly aspirational and easily attainable for other men and boys. Here, it is crucial to note that The Real World appears to be targeting the most vulnerable male audiences, while making gross assumptions such as that everyone in Kenya

is poor. This can be seen through discursive messaged such as: 'The Real World is so cost-effective that even people in the third world can break free' (The Real World, 2025a. np) and 'This 21-year-old student from Kenya went from struggling with no skills to making over $30,000 in just five months (The Real World, 2025d: np). Further, The Real World (2025a) uses self-explanatory, simple, and catchy titles for its campuses, such as the 'Moneybag Mindset Course', suggesting that the target audiences are younger – and perhaps more gullible – viewers. Concerningly, by orienting The Real World primarily towards young and even vulnerable male audiences, the platform creates fertile ground for the exploitation uncovered by recent journalistic commentaries. Javed et al. (2023), for instance, reported on how members of The Real World were instructed to create videos for a campaign intended to pressure authorities to permit Tate and his brother, Tristan Tate to leave Romania during their house arrest. Moreover, Hume (2024: para.10) reports that once inside The Real World, boys and men are urged to act as a 'decentralised content factory' for Tate, reposting his content on platforms where Tate's official accounts are now banned.

Additionally, The Real World uses rhetorical strategies, such as juxtaposition, to attract new members. On The Real World, Tate leverages his alleged status as 'a man with hundreds of millions of dollars' to position himself as superior to his audience (The Real World, 2025a: np). In contrast, Tate evokes language which feminises, and therefore subordinates, those who have not yet achieved his vision of success. For instance, Tate dichotomises between 'brokies', 'losers', 'peasants', 'peons', 'retards', 'failures', and 'winners' and 'sharks' (The Real World, 2025a, 2025b: np); this rhetoric serves to entrench hierarchical differentiations between masculinities. Crucially, Tate is situated at the summit of this hierarchy, above other members of The Real World, who are currently 'levelling up' (The Real World, 2025a: np). At the bottom of the hierarchy are the 'losers', those boys and men who have not subscribed and are therefore not fulfilling The Real World's hyper-capitalist, masculine ideals (The Real World, 2025a: np). Importantly, this hierarchy creates the appearance of opportunity in The Real World. By framing existing students as superior, Tate can persuade his followers that they should participate in The Real World to ascend the hierarchy of masculinities. For students who remain

subordinate to Tate, the model ensures continued subscription, while upholding the privileged status of hegemonic masculinity.

Notably, by equating masculine success with consumerism and capitalist pursuit, The Real World perpetuates rigid norms regarding men and masculinity. In a time where modern capitalism and neoliberalism have created and exacerbated financial insecurities for many young men, these expectations can, and do, generate latent anxieties around what it means to be a man (Copland, 2022). These expectations can produce harmful consequences. For example, research shows that when men perceive failures of masculinity, such as financial insecurity, the risk of them perpetrating intimate partner violence increases (May, 2024).

Furthermore, because The Real World codes economic success as masculine, it perpetuates regressive norms regarding women and femininity. These can be revealed when applying Cynthia Enloe's (2014: pg.25) infamous question, 'Where Are the Women?' to The Real World. Significantly, there is only one woman who is celebrated for making money through The Real World. This woman is praised for demonstrating masculine traits such as ambition, financial acumen, and work ethic, in a video titled 'Student Success Stories' on the website (The Real World, 2025a: np). There are understandable challenges with authenticating this video. Yet, the woman has the least revenue among all students, and is described through infantilising rhetoric, such as 'little sister' (The Real World, 2025a: np). This illustrates how success in The Real World is necessarily masculine, reproducing patriarchal norms. Indeed, while boys and men are portrayed as capable economic agents, women may only elevate their status by performing masculine traits, and still, they will never be accepted as real men. Interestingly, by accepting her subordinated status, the female member of The Real World performs a form of patriarchal femininity that complements, but does not supplant, masculinised privilege.

Ultimately, while the token inclusion of a woman helps to fortify the façade that The Real World is a legitimate school, a gender lens reveals the subtle, patriarchal underpinnings of The Real World. The

Real World promotes a hyper-capitalist version of success, in alignment with hegemonic masculinity. This version of success subordinates all women, in addition to non-hegemonic men. In doing so, The Real World prepares the ground for financial exploitation of Tate's audiences, while ensuring the continued privileging of hegemonic masculinity, as embodied by Tate.

Physical Success

Figure 6   Image of Tristan Tate taken from the 'Fitness campus' promotional video.

Figure 7   Image of Andrew Tate's physique, taken from the 'Fitness Campus.'

Secondly, a 'strong physique' and a 'determined mindset' are prerequisites for success in The Real World (The Real World, 2025a: np). The Real World offers an online 'fitness campus', which provides members with workout and diet regimes, allegedly curated by Tate's personal trainer (2025: np). As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the campus is advertised through a promotional video, consisting of a montage of steroid-style male physiques. In contrast to those men in the background of the imagery, here, the successful man is shown to have bulging muscles, a defined jawline, and the prized six-pack; all of these markers are embodied by Tate. As the focal point of the video, Tate connotes his lean physique with his capitalist possessions, thus marketing a version of success that is dominant, powerful, and strong, aligning with hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). This vision of success is reinforced by the other men who appear in the video. Next to Tate appears his brother Tristan Tate, fashioning a remarkably similar frame – white, athletic, and bulging biceps. On the fitness campus, the Tate brothers are shown engaging in traditionally male practices of weightlifting and kickboxing. This reifies The Real World's construction of success in alignment with hegemonic masculinity. For instance, because gender is a 'styled repetition of acts', activities such as weightlifting allow the Tate brothers to physically 'perform' hegemonic masculinity (Butler, 1988: pg.519). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity is performed by those who are stoic, as highlighted by Figures 6 and 7, which show the Tate brothers both fashioning an emotionless expression. Here, strength is portrayed as the opposite of emotion, compassion, and vulnerability, which are understood to be conventionally

feminine traits (Schippers, 2007). Subsequently, emotional vulnerability is ostracised in The Real World, and reduced to a symptom of economic failure, as evidenced by the assertion:

'you aren't depressed bro. You just need $10M'

(The Real World, 2025c: np).

Additionally, in constructing success, The Real World overtly connects the attainment of a muscular physique to toughness and aggression, as illustrated by the imagery of warriors, soldiers, and fighters shown in Figures 8 and 9. The recurring military imagery implies that successful men are those who are tough, dominant, fierce, and combat-ready. This evokes the gender essentialist idea that men are natural warriors who are always sent to war, and frames conflict as an essential feature of desired masculinity. This narrative is expedient for The Real World; strength is first outlined as an inherent requirement for a successful masculine form, and then The Real World positions its fitness campus as a means by which this masculine form can be attained.

Figure 8 Screenshot of male boxer taken from the 'Fitness Campus.' *Figure 9 Image of warrior men taken from the 'Fitness Campus.'*

For those consuming this narrative, however, this version of success poses significant harms. For instance, The Real World's requirements for success align with the 'man box', where men feel pressure to 'act tough, hide weakness, and "look good"' (Robb and Ruxton, 2017: para.1). This is concerning, as conformity to the man box is associated with higher suicidal ideation among boys and men, and higher rates of perpetrating psychological, physical, and sexual violence against women (Hill et al., 2020).

Alongside the Tate brothers, other men appear to be on a 'quest for muscularity' in The Real World (Underwood and Olson, 2019: pg.92). For instance, the fitness campus also contains screenshots of 'before and after' photos, which showcases alleged students who claim to have physically and mentally transformed since following The Real World's fitness regime (The Real World, 2025a: np). These commentaries invoke Foucauldian (1979) notions of the disciplined body – 'a body which is controlled not by physical restraint, but by individual acts of self-regulation' (Pienaar and Bekker, 2007: pg.539). By featuring these so-called transformation stories, The Real World rewards the men and boys who successfully perform their strong masculine ideal that is prescribed. In this context, a transition from a non-muscular to a fit male body emerges as an aesthetic metric and currency in the hierarchy of masculinity curated by The Real World.

By claiming to instruct students on how to achieve the mesomorphic bodily ideal, The Real World is positioned to appeal directly towards Tate's young male audience. Many young men are actively seeking a very specific body ideal – that is, hypertrophic, well-developed, and muscular (Wagner, 2016). In this context, The Real World's fitness campus sells an impressive benefits package. Significantly, though the promotional video sheds a paucity of light onto the program students will be enrolled on, Tate's doctrine is packaged in scientific discourses, with an emphasis on 'nutritional advice' and 'fitness wisdom' (The Real World, 2025a: np). This rhetoric is crafted to be persuasive for audiences, presenting The Real World's teachings as objective. This is worrying, however, as scientific rhetoric may naturalise more harmful ideas, acting as a gateway or connective tissue between seemingly objective ideology around self-actualisation and The Real World's more insidious views.

For instance, while The Real World (2025a: np) claims to offer its wisdom to all people, regardless of 'race or background', the platform's construction of success appears exclusive to those men who are physically able and white. As illustrated by Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9, the homogenous bodies presented as successful by The Real World reflect 'a very specific, very White, very able-bodied, and very privileged type of masculinity, that is hegemonic masculinity' (Wagner, 2016: pg.237). The framing of white male bodies as disciplined and superior evokes racialised stereotypes that historically associated blackness

with fatness, to justify white supremacist ideology (Strings, 2015). This shows how hegemonic masculinity reinforces patriarchy. For instance, to retain its elevated status, hegemonic masculinity positions all other masculinities, such as those encompassed by disabled and/or non-White men, in an inferior position to itself (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Finally, because gender has long been understood as dichotomous and mutually exclusive (Berdahl et al., 2018), The Real World's conflation of strength, masculinity, and success prepares the ground for misogynistic ideologies and gender essentialist myths which proliferate in the manosphere. This includes, for instance, the trope that men are naturally stronger and dominant, and thus that women are naturally weaker, and thus should be submissive to men (Haslop et al., 2024). This further exposes the patriarchal workings of The Real World; indeed, it is the relegation of femininities which legitimises the patriarchal subordination of women and non-hegemonic men.

Overall, The Real World's construction of success rewards those who adhere to Western, hegemonic, masculine ideals. Granted, The Real World outwardly proclaims that success can be attained through becoming physically strong and mentally tough. However, the covert message is that to be successful, one must be male, wealthy, able-bodied, and White. Women are eclipsed by this version of success, thus maintaining their subordinate position in the patriarchal order. Fortifying this hierarchy, The Real World marginalises and excludes non-conforming masculinities. Subsequently, the idea of success promoted by The Real World reinforces hegemonic male dominance.

Sexual Success

Figure 10 Screenshot of heteronormative imagery taken from The Real World.

Figure 11 Screenshot of female dancer taken from the 'Fitness Campus.'
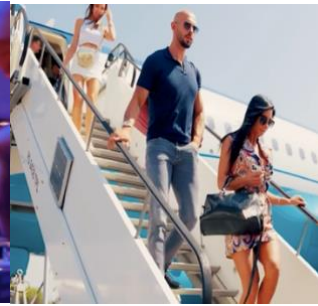
Figure 12 Screenshot of Andrew Tate accompanied by two women aboard a private jet taken from The Real World.

Third, the version of success that is promoted by The Real World necessitates heterosexual dominance. Figures 7 and 9 illustrate how heterosexual prowess is positioned as a prerequisite for men wishing to attain The Real World's version of success. Significantly, the materially successful men on The Real World are portrayed as having unbridled access to women (see Figures 7 and 9), while the platform promises to teach men how to 'attract an ideal partner' (The Real World, 2025a: np). In this way, men's sexual access to women is central to The Real World's vision of success.

Additionally, The Real World proclaims:

'Money is easy, women are easy, the life you want is easy, you just have to fall in love with the work'

(The Real World App, 2025: np.).

Here, The Real World commodifies and likens women to 'money', presenting the two as prerequisites for masculine success. This assertion reflects what Thorburn identified as the 'neoliberal emphasis on individualism and a capitalist "hustle culture" that underlies manosphere logics, particularly pertaining to dating strategies' (2023: pg.457). Indeed, as previously established, The Real World urges men to invest in their careers and physical appearance. Here, the platform promises that men who conform will, in turn, reap profits from the sexual marketplace. While men are positioned as active agents in this dynamic, women are framed as passive rewards, or prizes, to be attained by physically and materially successful men. It is troubling that women are portrayed in this way; as Nussbaum (1995) contends, the

objectification of women can imbue a sense of ownership among men and boys over women's and girls' bodies, in turn legitimising controlling and/or oppressive behaviours. Moreover, pressures to perform or defend one's heterosexuality, in attainment of hegemonic ideals, can lead men and boys to perpetuate harmful behaviours, such as online sexual harassment (Henry and Flynn, 2019).

Nonetheless, The Real World repeatedly portrays women as objects of sexual desire. Figure 8, for instance, is taken from the Fitness Campus promotional video. In contrast to the imagery of warriors and muscular men, the video shifts to a woman, who is dressed in conventionally eroticised attire, dancing in front of the camera. The lens pans and zooms in on fragmented parts of her body, enacting the 'male gaze' (Oliver, 2017: pg.451), and constructing an ideal of femininity as passive and objectified – an inverse reflection of the hypermasculine ideal. The stark juxtaposition between male and female bodies on the fitness campus reinforces patriarchal gender binaries, as normative masculinity is depicted as strong, assertive, and agentic, while women are reduced to their (hetero)sexual capacities and (hetero)sexual appeal.

Here, The Real World engages in 'sexualised sexism', whereby sexualisation is purposefully employed to subordinate women (Coy, 2014: pg.2). For instance, because Tate's audience is predominantly male, the woman is framed as a sexualised spectacle for male consumption, and is reduced to an object that exists in service of men (Seabrook et al., 2021). Feminist scholars argue that objectification dehumanises women, with harmful and dangerous implications. For instance, Mulvey (1999: pg.809) argues that the portrayal of women as images to be looked at by men normalises their sexual objectification and fuels a culture of male entitlement. Moreover, exposure to sexually objectifying media is strongly associated with increased acceptance of rape myths and higher rates of sexually deceptive behaviour among men (Seabrook et al., 2021). In this context, The Real World can be understood as contributing to the 'continuum of sexual violence' (Kelly, 1988: pg.46), wherein more subtle acts of misogyny– such as female objectification – offer a gateway or rationale for more insidious acts of gender-based harm.

Notably, though it is claimed that women are easy, the underlying message is that only rich and strong men are worthy of, and able to attract, female sexual partners. For instance, Tate purports that 'there is no point in being rich without being strong', implying that those who are not both will be 'left behind' from the rewards that successful men achieve (The Real World, 2025a: np). This assertion is misogynistic, as it portrays women as fickle and implies that they are naturally selective towards economically and physically successful men. Further, this rhetoric supports and resonates with insidious logics that circulate in the manosphere, such as the '80/20 rule' – the myth where 80 percent of women are attracted to the top 20 percent of men – that is popular among incel groups (Cottee, 2020: pg.6). It is plausible that The Real World evokes these myths purposefully, to strategically capitalise on contemporary male anxieties around dating and sexual success (Copland, 2022). In offering a paid solution to these insecurities, The Real World allows Tate to profit from the patriarchal and misogynistic ideologies that he promotes.

Additionally, by framing heterosexual prowess as a critical marker of masculinity, The Real World reinforces heteronormativity, the systemic privileging of heterosexuality (Jackson, 1999). To demonstrate, while Figures 10 and 12 draw an equivalence between heterosexual relations and affluence, non-heterosexual relationships are notably absent in The Real World. This works to sustain the patriarchal order. Indeed, invoking a supposedly natural factuality from which to understand heterosexual relations can lead to the denial, denigration, and stigmatisation of LGBTQ+ identities, relationships, and behaviour (Jackson, 1999; Van der Toorn et al., 2020). This is because the privileged and normative status of heterosexuality necessarily entails 'naming the other' – that is, homosexuality – as an inferior outsider (Jackson, 1999: pg.173)

Interestingly, the 'othering' of LGBTQ+ communities is more subtly woven into The Real World's websites and occurs primarily through the framing of success as ineludibly heterosexual. This contrasts with the overt homophobia that is espoused on The Real World's X platform. To demonstrate:

'Remember. You can't say "I gave up" without saying "I gay". So never give up' (The Real World, 2025e: np)

Perhaps, this contrast speaks to the nature of X, as a platform where inflammatory and controversial statements attract more views (Williams, 2024). Nonetheless, in a time where UK teachers report escalating rates of transphobic and homophobic abuse in schools (Adams, 2025), and where violence against LGBTQ+ communities in on the rise (Cohen, 2024), the proliferation and normalisation of heteronormative and homophobic sentiments tailored toward boys and young men online is a cause for concern.

Overall, in addition to its economic and physical imperatives, The Real World promotes a version of success that imposes heteronormative imperatives on boys and men. These imperatives are patriarchal, as they subordinate women by reducing them to instruments of male gratification. Moreover, these imperatives stabilise hegemonic masculinity by allowing for the privileging of heterosexual masculinities over non-heterosexual others. In a time where homophobia, misogyny, and sexism remain pertinent issues among boys and young men (Adams, 2025; Cohen, 2024), the propagation of these harmful ideologies by The Real World demands a comprehensive understanding and effective challenging.

Chapter 3: Escaping the Matrix

Figure 13 The Real World logo against a background of the 'matrix code', taken from The Real World website.

Figure 14 Image showing the utilisation of the red pill metaphor on The Real World website.

In addition to its commodified version of success, which aligns with hegemonic masculinity, The Real World strongly promotes the idea of the 'matrix' (see Figures 13 and 14). Broadly, the 'matrix' is a reference to the 1999 film 'The Matrix', and the belief that oppressive forces aim to control and silence people within the 'simulation' that controls society and that one must 'wake up' to acknowledge this simulation via swallowing the 'red pill' (Smith et al., 2025: pg. 4). The concept of the matrix is prominent among manosphere groups adjacent to Tate. This includes incels, for instance, who describe 'waking up' to the reality that 'men are actually the marginalised gender' in a modern gynocracy (Glace et al., 2021: p.293).

Figure 15 Image of Tate, taken from 'The Real World Official Trailer'.

Figure 16 Matrix imagery and Tate shown in 'The Real World Official Trailer'.

Similarly, The Real World advances the idea that society is under the control of an oppressive matrix system, and that this system works to enslave men. To illustrate, Figures 15 and 16 are taken from 'The Real World Official Trailer', which appears on the homepage of the website (The Real World, 2025a: np). The video opens with Tate, who addresses his audience as 'slaves', programmed by the matrix (The Real World, 2025a: np). Here, one can see how the matrix metaphor includes strong and very

polarised constructions of the 'heroic self' and 'threatening other' as part of their formulation (Van Veeren et al., forthcoming 2025: pg.3). Indeed, in the video, The Real World casts Tate as a liberator, offering an alternative situation in which men can 'escape' slavery joining The Real World (The Real World, 2025a: np). On the other hand, both Tate and The Real World portray those advancing the matrix system as a significant threat.

For instance, The Real World openly expresses disdain for traditional education systems, which 'are designed to keep you broke' and 'prepare you for a life of slavery inside the matrix' (The Real World, 2025a: np). The Real World offers no substantial evidence to support these claims. Nonetheless, this rhetoric allows The Real World to advertise itself as an emancipating force, and 'the only university teaching you how to escape (The Real World, 2025a: np). Tate's strategy, here, is characteristic of a 'post-truth' era, whereby specific ideologies are promoted for personal gain, often at the expense of factual accuracy (Harambam et al., 2022: p.784).

Furthermore, echoing a number of contemporary, right-wing, populist figures (Orlando, 2022; Dimri, 2024), The Real World explicitly critiques 'woke' ideology, which is framed as part of the oppressive matrix system. For example, The Real World warns audiences:

'You have 1460 days to become so rich and so important that you are a cultural force which will help resist the Woke Mind Virus' (The Real World by Andrew Tate, 2024: np).

Within the manosphere, anti-woke and matrix rhetoric are often used to pathologize feminism and progressive social movements (Copland, 2023). Indeed, 'woke' is a colloquial term which typically refers to an awareness of social injustices, such as racism, sexism, and transphobia (Hernández-Truyol, 2023: np). While the 'woke mind virus' trope disavows these injustices, the matrix narrative positions Tate's predominantly male audiences as the real victims in society. This narrative is self-serving for the platform, namely because The Real World's vision of success already works to stoke up ontological insecurities among boys and men, particularly those who deviate from the hegemonic masculine ideal.

However, rather than blame the rigid gender norms prescribed by The Real World as a cause of these anxieties, the platform strategically deploys the woke mind virus trope. In the context of a perceived male disenfranchisement, this rhetoric allows for the scapegoating of liberal and/or feminist movements and those considered beneficiaries of these movements, such as women and/or other marginalised communities (Copland, 2023). The matrix narrative ultimately frames these communities and movements as undermining the rightful position of men in society.

In addition, Tate utilises The Real World to portray himself as a personal victim of the matrix. To illustrate, in a recent video posted to The Real World, Tate declares:

'I am back. They tried to erase us, but they have failed. The ultimate matrix assault. Stage one was to delete us from social media, silence us so we couldn't counter their lies. Stage two was to have the mainstream media brand us as villains and convince the weak that we deserve what came next. Stage three was the false charges, a Romanian dungeon, facing 25 years in an eastern European gulag'

(The Real World Tate, 2025: np).

Here, The Real World purposefully leverages the idea of the matrix to deflect responsibility for Tate's misogynistic rhetoric and alleged criminal behaviours. Indeed, the idea of the matrix is expanded to include the women who have accused Tate of criminal sexual offences, the Romanian authorities who arrested Tate for sexual crimes, the media who have reported on Tate's overt misogyny and ongoing criminal trials, and the technology companies who de-platformed Tate following his arrest (Das, 2022b). Within this narrative, attempts to sanction Tate are framed as illegitimate and part of a coordinated attack on his power and social standing. Crucially, The Real World not only claims that Tate was subject to 'false' charges, but also describes the media's coverage of Tate's behaviour as 'insidious propaganda' (The Real World, 2025a: np). Subsequently, the matrix metaphor serves as a protective shield for Tate, who is able to deny personal responsibility for his alleged criminal activity, and can dodge further criticism on his character, by painting himself as a victim of a wider conspiracy against men. Interestingly, Banet-Weiser (2021) shows how male suffering discourses are deployed by

men to reinstate the normalcy of male privilege through the articulation of its loss. This strategy is exemplified by Tate. For instance, in his view, the rightful social order, where successful, hegemonic men can dominate society with impunity, was disrupted when Tate was accused of sexual crimes and placed in a 'gulag'. Hence, by taking on the mantle of victimhood himself, while denying the injustices faced by women and marginalised groups, Tate secures a masculine hegemony and reaffirms the patriarchal order. In this way, The Real World conveys a harmful message – that neither Tate nor his followers should feel any responsibility for the harm they inflict upon others, particularly women.

Notably, the proliferation of attacks perpetrated by self-proclaimed incels indicates that the matrix rhetoric can be dangerous, particularly when mobilised to provoke or justify violence (Cottee, 2020). Worryingly, the language deployed by The Real World often connotes violence and aggressive behaviour. For example, The Real World recently announced:

'it's time for the counter-attack… It's time for us to put five thousand nails in our enemies coffin'

(The Real World Tate, 2025: np).

This discourse may be used to legitimise violence against feminists and the feminine; after all, the 'enemies' constructed by The Real World are those who challenge the subordination of women and marginalised communities, or in other words, are perceived as woke. It is because they disrupt the patriarchal order – the system from which hegemonic men, such as Tate, benefit from (Connell and Pearse, 2014) – that The Real World urges its male audiences to engage in a 'counter-attack'. Subsequently, such rhetoric calls for a 'return of social arrangements that guarantee white men's power and sexual fulfilment' (Kelly and Aunspach, 2020: pg.151). By offering a means for Tate's followers to engage in this 'attack', The Real World enables this violent masculinity to be a profitable business model. It is not without irony, however, that Tate frames his online school as a vehicle for male liberation, while emerging evidence suggests the financial exploitation of members of The Real World (Hume, 2023).

Finally, against the backdrop of conspiratorial matrix narratives, The Real World constructs an image of Tate as a saviour or beholder of truth. This conceptualisation acts as a connective tissue between The Real World's content and Tate's wider ecosystem, particularly in an era of post-truth (Harambam et al., 2022). Indeed, for audiences who perceive Tate as one of the few legitimate voices outside of the matrix, continued support for Tate, including engagement with his political party BRUV (Cockerell, 2025), may increase. This is troubling, given that Tate is associated with far-right extremists, such as Tommy Robinson (Hope not Hate, 2024).

Overall, understanding The Real World's utilisation of the matrix metaphor offers deeper insight into the ideological project that the platform promotes. Earlier chapters illustrate that the version of success promoted by The Real World commodifies hegemonic masculinity, therefore upholding the patriarchal order. The matrix narrative allows Tate to claim that this order is under attack by conspiring forces, namely the media, the justice system, and broader 'woke' institutions, which are claimed to be actively undermining the power and authority of hegemonic men. Though not mentioned explicitly, anti-feminist tropes are woven into this discourse, with feminism painted as an invisible bogeyman eroding the patriarchal order from which Tate, and indeed all men, benefit. In this context, the matrix metaphor is used to recruit boys and men to join The Real World, to stabilise and/or restore the patriarchal order. Of course, hegemonic men, like Tate, remain at the summit of this gender order; nonetheless, subordinated masculinities are invited to ascend through adherence to the hegemonic masculine ideals prescribed and sold by The Real World. As such, The Real World provides a vehicle for Tate to extract vast profits from his male audiences and ensure that his dominant position in the patriarchal order is maintained.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate The Real World. A gender lens, guided by the concept of intersectionality, informed the analysis of publicly available content on The Real World's websites and profiles on X. The findings indicate that The Real World is a masked attempt to commodify hegemonic masculinity and reinforce patriarchal hierarchies, in a manner that is highly lucrative for Andrew Tate. Ultimately, what The Real World 'sells' is a normative version of masculinity characterised by Western hegemonic ideals, coupled with a need for reproducing and naturalising patriarchy. Existing literature has identified the overt expressions of hetero-sexism and misogyny, which dominate Tate's algorithmically amplified content (Haslop et al., 2024). This project, however, found that patriarchal ideologies are often more subtly woven into The Real World. Indeed, on The Real World, patriarchy is reproduced through the prescription of hegemonic masculinity, the objectification and othering of women and LGBTQ+ communities, and the deriding of feminist and/or progressive movements. Hence, The Real World enables Tate to reinforce patriarchy in a more covert manner than previously understood.

Chapter 2 revealed that The Real World repackages patriarchy within a discourse of self-actualisation and success, purposefully tailored towards Tate's primary audience of boys and young men. The platform promotes a narrow definition of success in alignment with hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), necessitating capital accumulation, physical dominance, and heterosexual prowess. In doing so, The Real World entrenches hierarchical distinctions between masculinities, elevating hegemonic masculinity above all others and non-normative gender identities. Tate is positioned at the summit of this hierarchy, maintaining his hegemonic status through the subordination of non-normative masculinities, such as those possessed by economically inferior, non-White, disabled, and/or non-heterosexual men. Women are not only excluded from The Real World's version of success, but they are reduced to material objects of (hetero)sexual desire, or added as a form of tokenism. In this way, The Real World works to sustain the marginalised position of women, gender-diverse people, and non-hegemonic men in the gender order, therefore reproducing patriarchy. By purporting to offer a

means by which men and boys can ascend this hierarchy, patriarchy is rendered profitable by The Real World.

Additionally, The Real World reifies patriarchy through conspiratorial discourse and a narrative of male suffering. Chapter 3 demonstrated how the platform leverages issues of male disenfranchisement and the 'matrix' trope. The Real World exploits a discourse of male victimhood, particularly in relation to Tate. Resultantly, the normalcy of hegemonic male privilege is reinforced through the articulation of its loss, at the hands of women, marginalised communities, in addition to feminist and/or progressive forces. Thus, though The Real World's promotion of hegemonic masculinity works to exacerbate latent male anxieties, the platform's appeal lies in its promise to restore the dividends of patriarchy to boys and men.

These insights have significant implications for how we must understand Andrew Tate's appeal. Contemporary discourse often presumes that the young men who are drawn to the manosphere – including Tate – hail primarily from working-class backgrounds (e.g., Day, 2025; Hill, 2025). Granted, The Real World does flaunt wealth as a signifier of success and promises its members financial liberation. However, this project reveals that the platform's allure lies in the pledge to restore the patriarchal order, which has been purportedly dismantled by the 'matrix'. At its core, therefore, The Real World promises young men not just financial success, but a world where hegemonic male dominance goes unchallenged, and where women's roles are subservient and clearly outlined. Failure to recognise the nuanced appeal of The Real World can have serious consequences. Namely, fixating solely on The Real World's economic appeal overlooks the proliferation of hetero-sexism and misogyny across all social strata, including in elite spaces, where economic anxiety is relatively minimal. This risks leaving such ideologies unchallenged.

Although the findings are robust, this project was somewhat limited in its inability to dissect the specific discourses that members of The Real World are exposed to behind the paywall. Future research could build upon this investigation by examining the rhetoric that members access and produce on The Real

World's members-only Discord server. This analysis could also reveal how members are actively responding to The Real World once inside. Nonetheless, an in-depth analysis of The Real World's publicly available material contributes to the literature. Indeed, this project uncovered that The Real World is a vehicle for reaffirming patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, under the guise of male self-actualisation and success. In light of this project's findings, it is important that The Real World is not dismissed as a simplistic 'get-rich-quick' scheme. Rather, The Real World must be understood as a strategic and sincere effort to recruit boys and men to (re)produce patriarchy and reassert hegemonic male dominance, in a manner which is highly profitable for Andrew Tate.

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Appendices

Figure 1. Screenshot of Andrew Tate on a private jet, posted by The Real World on X. Image obtained: https://x.com/trw_tate/status/1900501207921107026 [Accessed 1 May 2025].

Figure 2. Screenshot of Andrew Tate sat on a sports car, taken from The Real World's website. Image obtained: https://www.therealworldportal.com/ [Accessed 1 May 2025].

Figure 3. Screenshot of Andrew Tate from the 'You have two choices' video on The Real World's website. Image obtained: https://www.therealworldportal.com/ [Accessed 1 May 2025].

Figure 4. Screenshot of Andrew Tate taken from The Real World Tate on X, captioned 'What color is your Pagani?' Image obtained: https://x.com/trw_tate/status/1918043458205364378 [Accessed 1 May 2025].

Figure 5. Image from the 'Features' sub-page of The Real World. Image obtained: Image obtained: https://therealworld.net/#features [Accessed 5 May 2025].

Figure 6. Image of Tristan Tate taken from the 'Fitness Campus' promotional video. Image obtained: https://therealworld.net/#features [Accessed 5 May 2025].

Figure 7. Image of Andrew Tate's physique, taken from the 'Fitness Campus.' Image obtained: Image obtained: https://therealworld.net/#features [Accessed 5 May 2025].

Figure 8. Screenshot of male boxer taken from the 'Fitness Campus.' Image obtained https://therealworld.net/#features [Accessed 5 May 2025].

Figure 9. Image of warrior men taken from the 'Fitness Campus' https://therealworld.net/#features [Accessed 5 May 2025].

Figure 10. Screenshot of heteronormative imagery taken from The Real World. Image obtained: https://www.therealworldportal.com/ [Accessed 1 May 2025].

Figure 11. Screenshot of female dancer taken from the 'Fitness Campus.' Image obtained: https://therealworld.net/#features [Accessed 5 May 2025].

Figure 12. Screenshot of Andrew Tate accompanied by two women aboard a private jet taken from The Real World. Image obtained: https://therealworld.net/ [Accessed 5 May 2025].

Figure 13. The Real World logo against a background of the 'matrix code', taken from The Real World website. Image obtained: https://therealworld.net/[Accessed 5 May 2025].

Figure 14. Image showing the utilisation of the red pill metaphor on The Real World website. Image obtained: https://www.therealworldportal.com/ [Accessed 1 May 2025].

Figure 15. Image of Tate, taken from 'The Real World Official Trailer' Image obtained: https://therealworld.net/ [Accessed 5 May 2025].

Figure 16. Matrix imagery and Tate shown in 'The Real World Official Trailer'. Image obtained: https://therealworld.net/ [Accessed 5 May 2025].