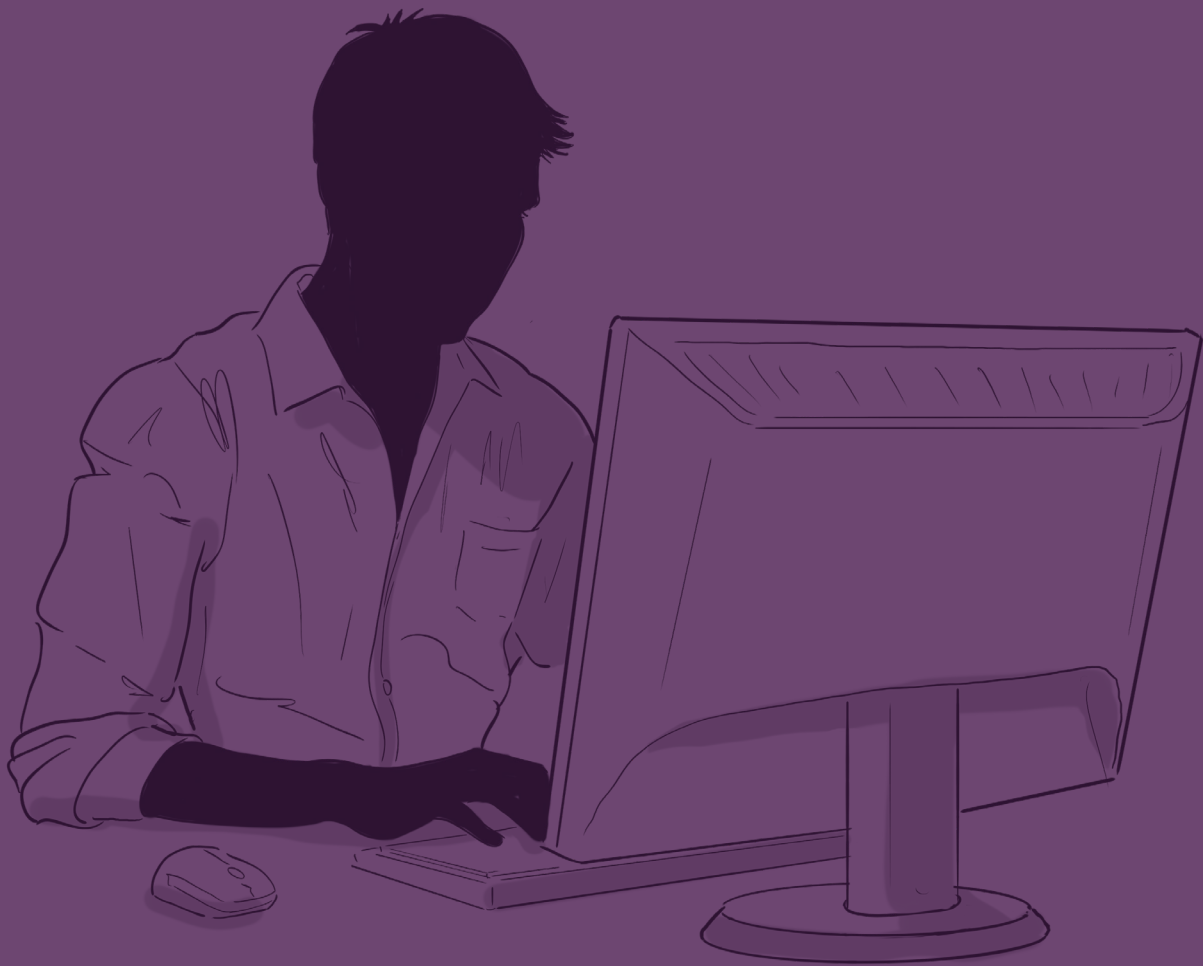

GOING MAINSTREAM: MALE SUPREMACY, THE MANOSPHERE, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



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About this publication

This resource is intended to raise awareness among administrators, faculty, and staff in higher education about the ways online extremist narratives about gender filter into campus culture, harming students, impeding academic success, and undermining campus cohesion. Integrating studies across multiple fields, including security studies, gender studies, sociology, and psychology, this review and secondary research supplements the Building Resilient & Inclusive Communities of Knowledge (BRICK) toolkit developed by the Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab (PERIL) at American University, in partnership with the Lumina Foundation. The BRICK toolkit identifies a set of tools and resources to help constituents across higher education—from campus leadership, to faculty, staff, and students—build resilience to violent supremacist ideologies, conspiracy theories, mis/dis/mal-information, propaganda, and hate speech.

This resource focuses on the intersection of gender-based harms, extremist narratives, and violence on college campuses. It explores how male supremacist ideas once confined to niche corners of the internet have become mainstream, supporting the conditions for gender-based harms online and offline, particularly against women and LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff. Research from numerous fields—including security studies, criminology, and gender studies—finds that male supremacist beliefs are a risk factor for perpetrating multiple forms of harm, from sexual violence to extremist violence. By learning to identify and respond effectively to harmful narratives and behaviors, higher education institutions can strengthen safe, inclusive, and resilient learning environments where all students can thrive.

1 "Male Supremacy," accessed February 10, 2026, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/male-supremacy/>.

2 "The Cost of the Man Box: A Study on the Economic Impacts of Harmful Masculine Stereotypes in the United States (Equimundo, 2019), <https://www.equimundo.org/resources/the-cost-of-the-man-box-a-study-on-the-economic-impacts-of-harmful-masculine-stereotypes-in-the-united-states/>; Andra Teten Tharp et al., "A Systematic Qualitative Review of Risk and Protective Factors for Sexual Violence Perpetration," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 14, no. 2 (2013): 133–167, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838012470031>; Bettina Rottweiler et al., "A Common Psychology of Male Violence? Assessing the Effects of Misogyny on Intentions to Engage in Violent Extremism, Interpersonal Violence and Support for Violence against women," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 37 no. 3 (2025): 287–312; Sandra M. Stith et al., "Intimate Partner Physical Abuse Perpetration and Victimization Risk Factors: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 10, no. 1 (2004): 65–98, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2003.09.001>; Kevin J. Vagi et al., "Beyond Correlates: A Review of Risk and Protective Factors for Adolescent Dating Violence Perpetration," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 42, no. 4 (2013): 633–649, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-013-9907-7>.

3 Equimundo, *The Cost of the Man Box*.

4 "Male Supremacy," Southern Poverty Law Center.

5 YouTube Rakes in Millions in Ad Revenue from Videos of Misogynist, Andrew Tate," Center for Countering Digital Hate, August 19, 2022, <https://counterdhate.com/blog/youtube-rakes-in-millions-in-ad-revenue-from-videos-of-misogynist-andrew-tate/>; Callan Quinn, "\$40M In Crypto-Related Activity Linked To 'Manosphere' Influencers," *Forbes*, May 24, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/digital-assets/2023/05/24/over-40-million-in-crypto-related-activity-linked-to-manosphere-influencers-like-andrew-tate/>; Craig Haslop et al., "Mainstreaming the Manosphere's Misogyny Through Affective Homosocial Currencies: Exploring How Teen Boys Navigate the Andrew Tate Effect," *Social Media + Society* 10, no. 1 (2024): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241228811>.

6 Brett Milano, "The Algorithm Has Primacy over Media ... over Each of Us, and It Controls What We Do," *Harvard Law Today*, November 18, 2021, <https://hls.harvard.edu/today/the-algorithm-has-primacy-over-media-over-each-of-us-and-it-controls-what-we-do/>; Dr. Catherine Baker, Debbie Ging, and Dr. Maja Brandt Andreassen, *Recommending Toxicity: The role of algorithmic recommender functions on Youtube Shorts and TikTok in promoting male supremacist influencers*, (Dublin Center University, 2024), <https://www.dcu.ie/antibullyingcentre/recommending-toxicity>.

7 Tharp et al., "A Systematic Qualitative Review", 133–167; Vagi et al., "Beyond Correlates," 633–649.

8 David Cantor et al., *AAU Campus Climate Survey* (Association of American Universities, 2019) <https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/campus-climate-and-safety/aau-campus-climate-survey-2019>.

Executive Summary

This resource describes the effects of male supremacy on higher education campuses in recent years, and the negative impacts on safe and healthy learning environments for students. Male supremacy is an ideology that positions women and LGBTQ+ individuals as fundamentally inferior to men and leverages pseudoscientific arguments to advocate for male dominated societies.¹ Research from multiple fields has found that the misogynistic beliefs and rigid ideas of masculinity at the core of male supremacist ideology are associated with an increased likelihood to engage in a variety of forms of violence, including sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and mass targeted violence.² Belief in strict gender norms is also associated with higher likelihood that individuals will engage in risky behaviors, such as hazardous driving and alcohol or drug abuse, and with higher rates of suicidal ideation among men.³

Male supremacist ideas are increasingly moving into mainstream discourse from the so-called "manosphere." According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the manosphere is "a collection of websites, blogs and online forums characterized by their virulent misogyny and users' belief that modern-day society victimizes men."⁴ Manosphere influencers, some of whom earn millions, monetize advice to men on dating, fitness, finance, and mental health. They often use shock value and misogynistic or bigoted humor to push norms towards male supremacist ideas and shield themselves from criticism by claiming it is "just a joke."⁵ Male supremacist ideas are becoming mainstream via social media algorithms that target teens and boys at increasingly younger ages.⁶

The harmful norms around masculinity and femininity found in male supremacist discourse, such as beliefs that men should be dominant in a relationship, are associated with increased risk of perpetration of sexual violence, which remains a salient challenge in higher education.⁷ Rates of sexual and intimate partner violence on higher education campuses remain high, especially for undergraduate women and transgender and nonbinary students.⁸

9 Pruden et al., "Birds of a Feather: A Comparative Analysis of White Supremacist and Violent Male Supremacist Discourses," in *Right-Wing Extremism in Canada and the United States*, ed. Barbara Perry, Jeff Gruenewald, Ryan Scrivens (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 215-254; Lise Gotell and Emily Dutton, "Sexual Violence in the 'Manosphere': Antifeminist Men's Rights Discourses on Rape," *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 5 no. 2 (2016): 65-80, <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijicisd.v5i2.310>; Matteo Botto and Lucas Gottzén, "Swallowing and Spitting out the Red Pill: Young Men, Vulnerability, and Radicalization Pathways in the Manosphere," *Journal of Gender Studies* 33, no. 5 (2024): 596-608, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2023.2260318>; Stephane J. Baele et al., "From 'Incel' to 'Saint': Analyzing the Violent Worldview behind the 2018 Toronto Attack," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 33, no. 8 (2021): 1667-91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2019.1638256>.

10 Pruden et al., "Birds of a Feather," 215-254; Digital Male Supremacy: Online Narratives Before, During, and After the 2024 Election (Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) and OverZero, 2025), <https://perilresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/PERIL-and-Over-Zero-Digital-Male-Supremacy-Report-Final.pdf>; Priya Dixit, "Red Pills, White Genocide, and 'the Great Replacement': Rewriting History, and Constructing White Victimhood in/through Far-Right Extremist Manifestos and Texts," in *Race, Popular Culture, and Far-Right Extremism in the United States*, ed. Priya Dixit (Springer International Publishing, 2022), 173-205; "Misogyny Is a Powerful Undercurrent of the 'Great Replacement' Conspiracy Theory," *Anti-Defamation League*, published July 23, 2021, <https://www.adl.org/resources/article/misogyny-powerful-undercurrent-great-replacement-conspiracy-theory>.

11 Pablo Castillo Díaz and Nahla Valji, "Symbiosis of Misogyny and Violent Extremism: New Understandings and Policy Implications," *Journal of International Affairs* 72, no. 2 (2019): 37-56.

As male supremacist discourse has grown, it has facilitated new forms of gender-based harms online. Sexual harassment and intimate partner violence have expanded to include online doxxing, online threats of sexual violence, nonconsensual distribution of intimate images, and other forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). On- and offline harassment affects students, staff, and faculty in a multitude of ways and undermines a safe learning and working environment.

At its most extreme, manosphere communities act as a gateway to violent extremist spaces and ideas online.⁹ Male supremacist narratives are often intertwined with white supremacist beliefs, antisemitism, and other violent extremist ideas and conspiracy theories.¹⁰ Many perpetrators of mass shootings and targeted violence have espoused male supremacist beliefs and had a history of perpetrating gender-based violence.¹¹ This resource connects the dots among disparate forms of violence and the narratives that support them.

Misogyny and male supremacist beliefs are not "just a joke" and it is important that those working in higher education understand and addresses the harms of these beliefs. There is an increased need for faculty, staff, and administrators in higher education to be aware of male supremacist discourse and associated content students are exposed to online, to promote values of inclusivity and equality on campus, highlight alternative representations of masculinities, and disrupt harmful narratives targeting women and LGBTQ+ people on campus. To ensure the safety of campus communities, higher education professionals should:

- **Build campus networks of students, staff, faculty, and administrators to develop strategies to address gender-based harms and male supremacy on and off campus.**
- **Promote core values of dignity and respect for all to prevent and respond to gender-based harms on campus.**
- **Update gender-based violence prevention policy and student codes of conduct to include and address online conduct and online harms.**
- **Raise awareness of existing resources and support that are available to prevent and respond to gender-based harms in the campus community.**



I. Male supremacy: A harmful ideology

¹² Moustafa Ayad and Isabelle Frances-Wright, "Your Body, My Choice: Hate and Harassment towards Women Spreads Online (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2024), <https://www.isdglobal.org/digital-dispatch/your-body-my-choice-hate-and-harassment-towards-women-spreads-online/s>.

¹³ "Nick Fuentes | Beliefs, Groyper, & Charlie Kirk," Britannica, effective April 3, 2026, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nick-Fuentes>; "Nick Fuentes," Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/nick-fuentes/>; Ayad and Frances-Wright, "Your Body, My Choice."

¹⁴ Ayad and Frances-Wright, "Your Body, My Choice."

¹⁵ Abigail Jones, "'Homophobic and Misogynistic': Texas State University President Condemns Campus Demonstration," KXAN Austin, November 7, 2024, <https://www.kxan.com/news/local/san-marcos/homophobic-and-misogynistic-texas-state-university-president-condemns-campus-demonstration/>.

¹⁶ Abigail Jones, "'Homophobic and Misogynistic': Texas State University President Condemns Campus Demonstration," KXAN Austin, November 7, 2024, <https://www.kxan.com/news/local/san-marcos/homophobic-and-misogynistic-texas-state-university-president-condemns-campus-demonstration/>.

¹⁷ Emma Glassman-Hughes, "'Your Body, My Choice': Gen Z Women Are Feeling Unsafe at College and Online," Popsugar, November 8, 2024, <https://www.popsugar.com/identity/gen-z-vote-2024-election-49408620>.

A generation of students are growing up in an online ecosystem with increasing levels of misogyny and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. Online discourse does not stay confined to online spaces, but spills over into communities and educational campuses. A dramatic example occurred in the days following the November 2024 U.S. presidential election. Researchers tracked stunning increases in misogynistic rhetoric online, including the phrases "get back to the kitchen" and "repeal the 19th," referring to the constitutional amendment granting women's suffrage.¹² Nick Fuentes, a far-right live streamer and white nationalist, posted "Your body, my choice" on X (formerly Twitter), which went viral and garnered 35 million views.¹³ The phrase did not stay online—girls as young as seventh grade reported hearing boys using the phrase in their middle schools, with incidents reported in high schools and colleges as well.¹⁴ At a university in Texas, two men entered campus carrying a sign reading, "Women are Property."¹⁵ At another university in Alabama, students reported that their LGBTQ+ classmates were scared to leave their dorms after being the targets of hate and harassment following the election.¹⁶ LGBTQ+ youth crisis hotlines documented surges of up to nearly 700 percent in call volume in November and increased levels of suicidal ideation from LGBTQ+ youth.¹⁷

18 “Male Supremacy,” Southern Poverty Law Center; Pasha Dashtgard, “Male Supremacy and Online Radicalization: An Open-Source Ideology” (PhD diss UC Irvine, 2022). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6937c98h>; “The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico – Equimundo”; “The Cost of the Man Box.”

19 Lydia Bates et al., Not Just a Joke: Understanding & Preventing Gender- & Sexuality-Based Bigotry (Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/guides/peril-understanding-preventing-gender-sexuality-bigotry/>).

Male supremacy

The gender-based incidents described above demonstrate the growing intersection of extremist narratives, online culture, and gender-based harms influencing higher education communities. Seemingly disparate attacks on women’s and LGBTQ+ rights are connected through the ideology of male supremacy, which positions women as fundamentally inferior to men, uses pseudoscientific arguments claiming that genetic or biological differences between men and women logically result in “naturally-ordered” hierarchical societies in which men are dominant or superior, and punishes people of any gender who step outside of patriarchal social norms.¹⁸ This ideology also establishes hierarchies of superiority and inferiority among men, positioning an ideal “manly” man as superior.¹⁹ Within a male supremacist worldview, LGBTQ+ identities are perceived as a threat to heterosexual individuals and families because they threaten a so-called “natural” heterosexual order.

The term “male supremacy” differs from “patriarchy,” which refers to gendered social systems that are often embedded in cultural norms and institutions and privilege men over women in the distribution of power, status, or resources. In contrast, male supremacy is an ideology with a sociopolitical agenda that demands the restoration of male dominance and views feminism and LGBTQ+ rights as existential threats to society.



20 Brian Heilman, Gary Barker, Alexander Harrison, *The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico* (Equimundo, 2017), <https://www.equimundo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TheManBox-FullReport.pdf>.

21 Heilman, Barker, Harrison, *The Man Box*.

Rigid gender norms and “man box” culture

Male supremacy is based on rigid gender norms that are presented, often with pseudoscientific arguments, as biologically pre-determined rather than socially constructed. Within a male supremacist viewpoint, men and women are expected to behave in accordance with strict and limited norms of masculinity or femininity to be a “real man” or “real woman.” People who do not conform, especially LGBTQ+ individuals, may be shamed, ridiculed, insulted, or experience violence, often as an attempt to force them to adhere to strict views of gender.

In the 1980s, the Oakland Men’s Project developed the concept of the “man box,” which captures a set of beliefs communicated by families, schools, peers, communities, and the media that pressures men to uphold a very specific image of masculinity.

The core traits of the rigid “real man” identity include:²⁰

- **Self-reliance and not asking for help with problems or health**
- **Toughness and willingness to defend one’s reputation and hide vulnerability**
- **Physical attractiveness**
- **Rigid masculine gender roles in the home**
- **Heterosexuality and homophobia**
- **Hypersexuality (i.e., including having multiple female sexual partners)**
- **Use of aggression to resolve conflicts, and dominance in romantic and peer relationships**

The concept of the “man box” helps explain how societal pressures and messages reinforce a rigid picture of manhood for boys and men about what it means to be a “real man.” For men, upholding strict norms around masculinity can have several negative consequences, including increased risk of alcohol abuse, unprotected sex, depression, suicide, and perpetration of bullying and violence.²¹

- 22 Bates et al., Not Just a Joke.
- 23 "Male Supremacy," Southern Poverty Law Center.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 "Connecting the Dots," VetoViolence, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/connecting-the-dots/content/discover-connections>; Rottweiler et al., "A Common Psychology," 287–312; Equimundo, The Cost of the Man Box; Sharp et al., "A Systematic Qualitative Review," 133–167.
- 26 Equimundo, The Cost of the Man Box.
- 27 Rottweiler et al., "A Common Psychology," 287–312 to Gender-Equitable Men: Findings.
- 28 Thomas Frieden, Daniel M. Sosin, Howard R. Spivak and Larry Cohen, Connecting the Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence, (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Prevention Institute, 2014), https://www.cdc.gov/elder-abuse/communication-resources/connecting_the_dots-a.pdf.
- 29 Katharine Wood and Rachel Jewkes, "Violence, Rape, and Sexual Coercion: Everyday Love in a South African Township," Gender and Development 5, no. 2 (1997): 41–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/741922353>.
- 30 Sharp et al., "A Systematic Qualitative Review," 133–167.
- 31 TRuti Galia Levitov et al., "Pathways to Gender-Equitable Men: Findings from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey in Eight Countries," Men and Masculinities 17, no. 5 (2014): 467–501, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X14558234>.

Male supremacist narratives

Male supremacist discourse exists along a spectrum, in jokes, through explicit rhetoric, and in aggressive calls for violence. Common narratives portray men as innately and biologically superior to women and blame feminism for disturbing the perceived “natural” roles of man as protector and provider and woman as nurturer, housewife, and mother.²² They also blame feminism for “feminizing” men and society by promoting emotional openness and vulnerability and supporting women’s advancement in the workforce and education.

A dominant theme in male supremacist thought is inversive sexism, or the belief that feminism has privileged women over men. Proponents of this claim, who are disproportionately younger men but also include some young women, often allege that feminism has disadvantaged men in education, employment, and family law.²³ Male supremacist influencers describe a “gynocentric” society waging a “war against men,” where women’s education and career success is seen as an existential threat to men’s positions of power and authority.²⁴ These influencers also portray LGBTQ+ individuals as a threat to the “natural” social order, positioning anti-trans legislation as needed protection for women and children and the integrity of the nuclear family.

The supremacy-to-violence connection

Holding rigid gender beliefs that include ideas about male aggression, sexual prowess, and dominance over women has been identified across multiple studies as a potential risk factor for perpetrating multiple forms of violence, including domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence, suicide, and targeted mass violence.²⁵ Compared with men who have more flexible understandings of gender, men who subscribe to rigid masculine norms are more than three times as likely to make unwanted sexual comments to women and more than three times as likely to use physical violence.²⁶ Belief in male dominance in a gender hierarchy can engender sentiments of male entitlement, leading to feelings of grievance and victimhood and justifications for using violence or punishing women and others who violate the perceived “natural” order.²⁷

Multiple studies have found harmful norms around masculinity and femininity and hostility to women to be a risk factor for perpetrating various forms of gendered violence, including teen dating violence, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence.²⁸ Inequitable gender norms that foster beliefs in men’s sexual entitlement over women have been associated with a higher risk of perpetrating acts of sexual assault.²⁹ Similarly, aspects of “man box” culture are linked to a higher risk of perpetrating acts of sexual violence, acceptance of violence, adversarial heterosexual beliefs, and peer pressure to have sex.³⁰ Conversely, global studies show that men with more equitable gender attitudes are less likely to have perpetrated intimate partner violence.³¹

32 Rottweiler et al., "A Common Psychology," 287-312.

33 Diaz and Valji, "Symbiosis of Misogyny," 37-56.

34 Mass Shootings in the United States, (Everytown Research & Policy, 2023) <https://everytownresearch.org/mass-shootings-in-america/>.

35 Digital Male Supremacy: Online Narratives Before, During, and After the 2024 Election." (PERIL and OverZero, 2025), <https://www.projectoverzero.org/resources/digital-male-supremacy-online-narratives-before-during-and-after-the-2024-election>.

36 Robin Mamie, Manoel Horta Ribeiro, Robert West, Are Anti-Feminist Communities Gateways to the Far Right? Evidence from Reddit and YouTube, In the 13th ACM Web Science Conference (WebSci '21, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1145/3447535.3462504>.

37 Misogyny, Extremism, and Gun Violence, (Everytown Research & Policy, 2022). <https://everytownresearch.org/report/misogyny-extremism-and-gun-violence/>; Diaz and Valji, "Symbiosis of Misogyny," 37-56.

38 Anti-Defamation League, Misogyny Is a Powerful Undercurrent.

39 Ibid.

In addition to increasing the likelihood of supporting violence against women and perpetrating interpersonal violence, studies have shown misogyny to be a predictor of violent extremist intentions.³² Misogynistic behaviors are common in the backgrounds of perpetrators of mass violence, with numerous domestic terrorist actors and school shooters having prior histories of harassment, stalking, rape threats, sexual assault, or domestic violence.³³ Analysis of mass shooting incidents from 2015 to 2022 revealed that, in at least 46 percent of incidents, the perpetrator shot a current or former intimate partner or family member.³⁴

Intersection with other violent supremacist ideologies

Male supremacist beliefs and ideas are interwoven into other types of supremacist ideologies, including white supremacy, antisemitism, and religious supremacy.³⁵ Analysis finds the manosphere is a gateway to white supremacist platforms, and that up to a quarter of users in manosphere sub-communities have migrated to white supremacist platforms in recent years, resulting in significant overlap among the online user base.³⁶ Investigations into mass violence often find that perpetrators express or are motivated by virulent misogyny and homophobia in addition to other extremist views.³⁷

Male supremacy most violently intersects with white supremacy, xenophobia, and antisemitism within the culture of support for the Great Replacement conspiracy theory. Multiple perpetrators of mass shootings in the United States and around the globe have been motivated by this belief, which alleges that a "white genocide" is underway. The perceived causes of this "crisis" are feminism, support for reproductive freedom and contraception, immigration, interracial marriage, and LGBTQ+ rights.³⁸ Great Replacement conspiracists portray white men as protectors of white women, who are expected to increase white birth rates to ensure white people are the dominant race.³⁹



40 Dr. Krista Fisher, Simon Rice, Zac Seidler, Young Men's Health in a Digital World, (Movember, 2025) <https://us.movember.com/movember-institute/masculinities-report>.

41 Ruth Rebecca Tietjen and Sanna K. Tirkkonen, "The Rage of Lonely Men: Loneliness and Misogyny in the Online Movement of 'Involuntary Celibates' (Incels)," *Topoi* 42, no. 5 (2023): 1229–41, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-023-09921-6>.

Male supremacy is harmful for men too

In addition to male supremacy's clear harmful impacts for women and LGBTQ+ people, research also shows that men are negatively impacted by time spent online engaging with male supremacist content. Male supremacy content is damaging because while it promises fitness, relationship success, and self-worth, it does so by promoting ideas that foster grievance and isolation. Young men who engage with online "manfluencers" are more likely to report higher feelings of worthlessness, depression, restlessness, sadness, and nervousness, a lower prioritization of their mental health and of time with family and friends, and higher rates of risky sexual and health behavior.⁴⁰

Male supremacist beliefs are especially prevalent in online misogynistic incel communities, which are predominantly made up of young men who blame women for their inability to find sexual partners. Those who join incel communities online to find connection and support report higher levels of hopelessness. Research suggests that their social isolation is exacerbated through significant time online, including excessive gaming and usage of pornography.⁴¹



In brief

- Male supremacy is an ideology which promotes male dominance over women and LGBTQ+ individuals. It frames feminism and LGBTQ+ rights as existential threats to society based on pseudoscientific arguments for male superiority.
- Substantial research finds robust connections between holding harmful gender norms, male supremacist ideas, and heightened risk of perpetrating numerous forms of violence, including bullying, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, sexual violence, political violence, and mass targeted violence.
- Alternatively, support for gender equality is associated with a lower likelihood of perpetrating intimate partner violence.
- Male supremacist ideology is a gateway to white supremacist online communities.
- Male supremacy intersects with white supremacist, antisemitic, and xenophobic narratives and conspiracies in the Great Replacement Theory, which has motivated mass shootings and targeted violence around the world.
- Based in a deep sense of grievance, male supremacist ideas pit men against women and LGBTQ+ people, with negative outcomes for women, LGBTQ+ people, and men themselves.



A dark blue background with white line art illustrations of hands interacting with various mobile devices, including smartphones and tablets, scattered across the page.

II. Online influences and the spread of the manosphere

Modern day misogyny and anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment is amplified by online dynamics that have emerged in the last two decades with the advent of social media and artificial intelligence (AI). The rapid, accessible features of social media and AI have platformed a new generation of male supremacists and has enabled the rapid proliferation of their content that is targeting a wider range of viewers and reaching increasingly younger men and boys. While the integration of on- and offline friendships, communities, and relationships has created new opportunities for connection, the internet has also created new forums for spreading male supremacist narratives and conspiracies that normalize degrading rhetoric and violence towards women, Jewish people, people of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals, among others.

42 "Male Supremacy," Southern Poverty Law Center.

43 "What Is the Manosphere?", Equimundo, effective August 16, 2024, <https://www.equimundo.org/what-is-the-manosphere/>. Mamie, Ribeiro and West, Exploring Misogyny across the Manosphere.

44 Baker, Ging, and Andreasen, Recommending Toxicity.

45 Rottweiler et al., "A Common Psychology," 287-312.

46 Ibid.

47 "Incels," Institute for Strategic Dialogue, <https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/incels/>.

48 Nicky Woolf, "'PUAhate' and 'ForeverAlone': Inside Elliot Rodger's Online Life," The Guardian, May 30, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/30/elliott-rodger-puahate-forever-alone-reddit-forums>.

Manosphere

The manosphere is the online ecosystem for modern male supremacist discourse. It consists of overlapping online communities across a diverse set of websites, platforms, apps, and forums that promote misogynistic and anti-women narratives, with some prominent influencers endorsing sexual and physical violence against women.⁴² Since the emergence of the manosphere in the 2000s, research has documented an increase in the frequency of sexually explicit, violent, racist, and homophobic language over time.⁴³ Broadly speaking, the manosphere features ideological clusters like Men's Rights Activists (MRA), Pickup Artists (PUA), Incels, Men Go Their Own Way (MGTOW), and The Red Pill adherents. These groups have splintered, fractured, and migrated from niche online communities to the mainstream.

Some of the most common narratives on the manosphere are claims that men are being falsely accused of rape, that stoicism and emotional suppression are inherently masculine, and that the nuclear family is under threat from feminists, women, and the transgender rights movement.⁴⁴ Different sub-communities share the perception that men, especially those with traditionally "masculine" characteristics, face structural disadvantages and are under attack from feminism, women, and the "feminization" of society.

Manosphere talking points—that men are individually and collectively oppressed and are losing social status—increase men's vulnerability and susceptibility to perpetrating violence.⁴⁵ Research concludes that a threat to masculine status may motivate men to emphasize male dominance and aggression, behaviors which increase susceptibility to perpetrating violence.⁴⁶

The extremist fringes within the manosphere, most notably so-called "black pill" incel communities, call for explicit physical and sexual violence against women. Some have heeded these instructions via acts of mass violence, often ended in suicide.⁴⁷ Perpetrators of several incidents of mass violence against women or LGBTQ+ individuals have credited the manosphere as an inspiration for their acts.⁴⁸



49 Bates et al., Not Just a Joke.

50 Ibid.

51 Mamie, Ribeiro and West, Are Anti-Feminist Communities Gateways?

52 Bates et al., Not Just a Joke.

53 "Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)," Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/mgtow/#background>.

54 Mamie, Ribeiro and West, Are Anti-Feminist Communities Gateways?

55 Bates et al., Not Just a Joke.

56 Ibid.

57 Bruce Hoffman, Jacob Ware and Ezra Shapiro, "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1751459>.

Manosphere and adjacent sub-communities

There are several prominent groups in the manosphere that vary in discourse and goals but share a belief in misogynistic ideas.

Men's Rights Activists (MRA)

A group that opposes feminism based on the belief in an overarching feminist conspiracy to oppress men.⁴⁹ Adherents believe that the court system and society at large discriminate against men and that feminism is to blame for the challenges fathers encounter related to alimony, child support, and visitation rights.⁵⁰ The MRA community is linked with white supremacist forums.⁵¹

Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)

A separatist movement, specifically for heterosexual men who label women as innately toxic and deem it necessary to remove themselves from connections with them.⁵² While MGTOW started as a place to celebrate men who rejected the pressure to be in a relationship, these online communities quickly became overrun by contemporary male supremacist influence, including misogynistic incel and black pill rhetoric.⁵³ Research has demonstrated that about a quarter of the MGTOW subcommunity has migrated to white supremacist forums in recent years.⁵⁴

Pick-up Artists (PUAs)

A group of men who use manipulative and predatory strategies to coerce women into sexual acts predicated on the belief that casual sex is the most important validation of one's masculinity. PUA strategies reduce attraction to a set of rules or scripts that can be followed in order to manipulate women into sexual encounters.⁵⁵ Many PUA influencers market dating coaching products to younger men that are based on pseudoscientific notions of biology, anatomy, and evolutionary psychology.

Incels

Short for "involuntary celibates," misogynistic incels consider themselves incapable of entering into a romantic or sexual relationship. Adherents of this movement are resentful and hostile toward women and girls, and blame feminism, society, and women for their perceived lack of desirability. Misogynistic incel forums explicitly forbid comments or posts that provide comfort, care, or hope for members, and instead create a toxic online space predicated on stoking grievance, self-pity, vitriol, and dismay.⁵⁶ Researchers estimate that approximately 50 people have been killed in misogynistic incel-motivated attacks in the United States and Canada since 2014, with additional plots disrupted elsewhere, including several at universities.⁵⁷

58 Institute for Strategic Dialogue, "The 'Manosphere.'"

59 Ibid.

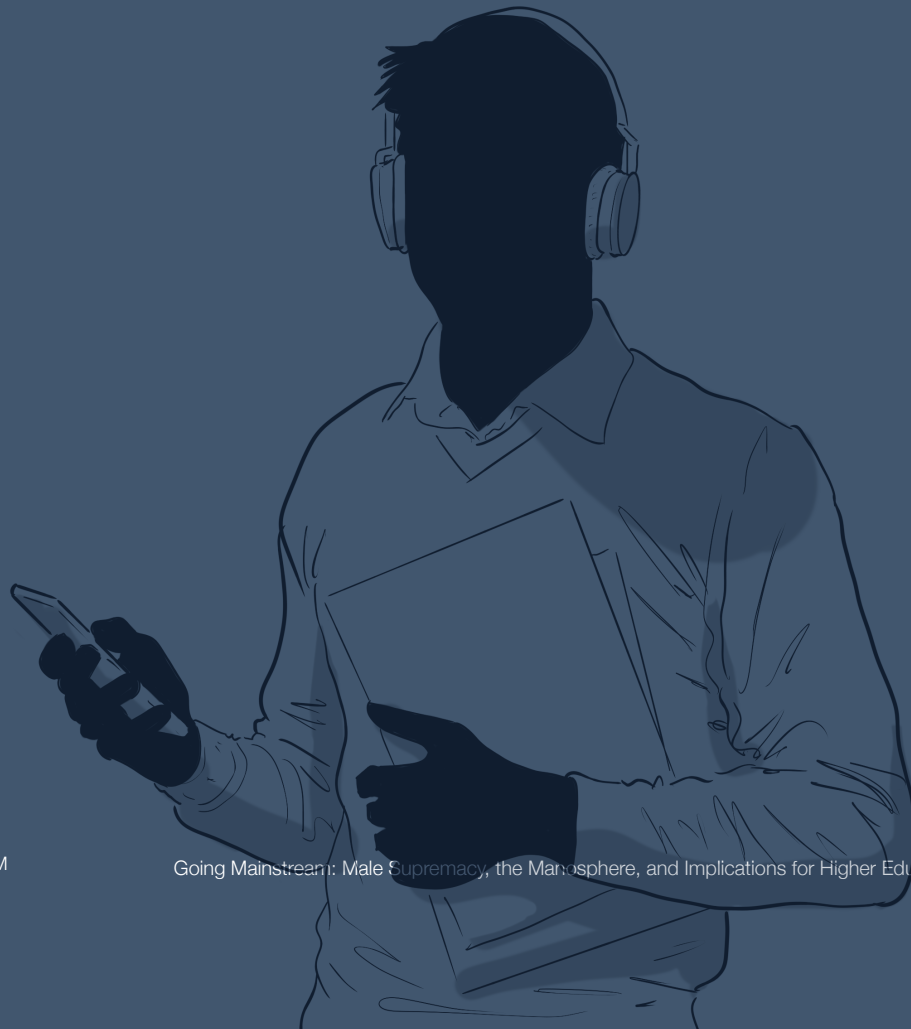
60 Bates et al., Not Just a Joke.

The red pill

The red pill ideology posits that society and relationships inherently favor women, who are biologically predetermined to be deceptive, superficial, and untrustworthy. Red pill ideology is one of the early influences on the contemporary manosphere and a pop culture reference to the movie *The Matrix*, in which taking a red pill opens one's eyes to "the truth" that others cannot see. The red pill emphasizes the possibility for self-improvement through adherence to a rigid set of masculine ideals as a response to the assertion that women have an innate desire for men who exhibit power, wealth, status, and muscularity.⁵⁸ A related ideology, the black pill, commonly found in incel communities, is a nihilistic worldview which argues that attractiveness and desirability is genetically pre-determined and thus one's inability to find a relationship is immutable, inescapable, and predetermined from birth.⁵⁹ The determinist nature of the black pill fosters sentiments of helplessness, hopelessness, and resentment.

Trad wives

Trad wives are predominately white female influencers who uphold patriarchal, heteronormative social structures by promoting traditional and rigid gender expectations of homemaking and child-rearing. While for some this lifestyle is portrayed as appealing or liberating, behind the sanitized images of motherhood and domesticity, these influencers are working full-time jobs creating brands. In addition to promoting a misleading image of motherhood and domesticity, some trad wives spread conspiracies about declining white birth rates, vaccines, and birth control and portray femininity in a way that maligns LGBTQ+ individuals.⁶⁰



61 Quinn, "\$40M In Crypto-Related Activity."

62 Isabella Kwai, "What to Know About Andrew Tate," The New York Times, December 10, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/andrew-tate-arrests-explained.html>.

64 Haslop et al., "Mainstreaming the Manosphere's Misogyny," 1-11.

65 "Connecting the Dots," Veto Violence, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

66 "Kaitlyn Regehr et al., "Normalizing Toxicity: The Role of Recommender Algorithms for Young People's Mental Health and Social Wellbeing," Frontiers in Psychology 16 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1523649>.

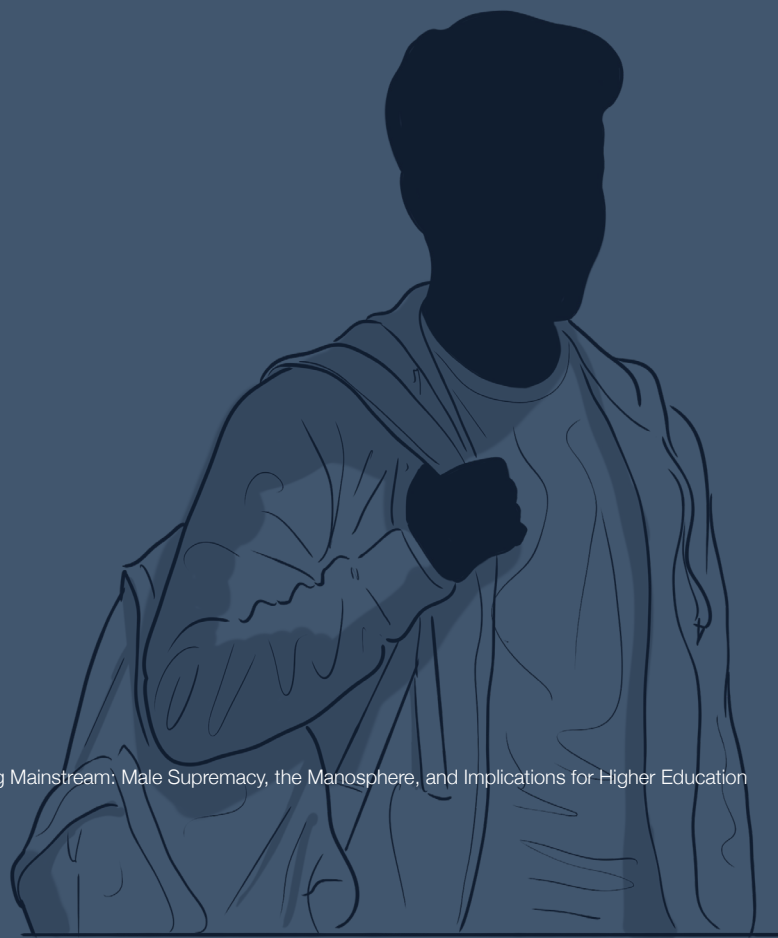
67 Dr. Fiona O'Rourke, Dr. Catherine Baker and Dr. Darragh McCashin, Addressing the Impact of Masculinity Influencers on Teenage Boys - A Guide for Schools, Teachers and Parents/Guardians, (Dublin City University, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.14102915>.

Manfluencers

Increasingly the manosphere monetizes dating, fitness, financial, and mental health advice, and has produced a group of "manfluencers," some of whom earn millions from warning men of threats and offering (paid) solutions.⁶¹ While individuals like Andrew Tate, a leading influencer in the manosphere currently facing 10 charges in the UK including rape and human trafficking,⁶² have garnered tremendous media coverage, the manosphere contains a large network of less well known but similarly minded influencers who espouse harmful content aimed at young men in particular.

Oftentimes, influencers present misogynistic ideas via shock humor or irony. Such framing enables viewers to feel part of a misunderstood in-group and is intended to dismiss dissenters who "can't take a joke."⁶³ Pushing the envelope and not becoming offended by the "joke" becomes a way to gain social currency.⁶⁴ However, allowing misogynistic humor and rhetoric to become mainstream supports a culture that normalizes violence against women and LGBTQ+ people.⁶⁵

Male supremacist influencers exploit very real challenges and struggles facing young men, including declining labor force participation, lower rates of college education relative to women, and high rates of suicide, to foster a sense of grievance against women and the LGBTQ+ community. Often in the form of self-help advice, "manfluencers" assert that women's advancement and LGBTQ+ identities threaten men's socioeconomic status and should be rolled back. Research has found that algorithms often amplify misogynistic content produced by "manfluencers" to young men searching for content related to loneliness, low self-esteem, and mental health.⁶⁶ This content frequently promotes commercial products such as supplements, self-improvement programs, and financial education that monetarily benefit the content creators.⁶⁷



68 Fisher, Rice and Seidler, Young Men's Health in a Digital World.

69 Michael B. Robb and Supreet Mann, Boys in the Digital Wild: Online Culture, Identity, and Well-Being, (Common Sense Media, 2025), <https://www.common SenseMedia.org/research/boys-in-the-digital-wild-online-culture-identity-and-well-being>.

70 "New Research Shows How TikTok and YouTube Shorts Are Bombarding Users with Misogynist Content," Dublin City University, April 17, 2024, <https://www.dcu.ie/humanities-and-social-sciences/news/2024/apr/new-research-shows-how-tiktok-and-youtube-shorts-are>.

71 Brett Milano, "The Algorithm Has Primacy over Media ... over Each of Us, and It Controls What We Do" Harvard Law Today, November 18, 2021, <https://hls.harvard.edu/today/the-algorithm-has-primacy-over-media-over-each-of-us-and-it-controls-what-we-do/>; Baker, Ging, and Andreasen, Recommending Toxicity.

72 Vivian Gerrand et al., "Mapping the Neo-Manosphere(s): New Directions for Research," Men and Masculinities 28, no. 5 (2025): 443–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X251350277>.

73 Cynthia Miller-Idriss, "The Far Right's Gender Playbook," Project Syndicate, December 12, 2025, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/gender-politics-authoritarians-secret-weapon-by-cynthia-miller-idriss-2025-12>; Alexandre Piquard, "Mark Zuckerberg wants more 'masculine energy' and less diversity policy," Le Monde, January 13, 2025, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2025/01/12/mark-zuckerberg-wants-more-masculine-energy-and-less-diversity-policy_6736961_19.html; Luis Martinez and Mary Kekatos, "How Hegseth's Newly Proposed Military Fitness Standards Compare to Existing Tests," ABC News, October 1, 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/hegseths-newly-proposed-military-fitness-standards-compare-existing/story?id=126110550>.

74 Daniel A. Cox, "Why Young Men Are Turning Against Feminism," The Survey Center on American Life, December 14, 2023, <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/newsletter/why-young-men-are-turning-against-feminism/>.

75 Cox, "Why Young Men Are Turning Against Feminism."

76 Ibid.

77 Arie Perlinger, Catherine Stevens, and Eviane Leidig, Mapping the Ideological Landscape of Extreme Misogyny, (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2023), <https://icct.nl/publication/mapping-ideological-landscape-extreme-misogyny>.

78 Claire Cain Miller et al., "How Video Games Are Shaping a Generation of Boys, for Better and Worse," The New York Times, October 3, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/03/upshot/video-games-boys-young-men.html>.

79 "The Double-Edged Sword of Online Gaming: An Analysis of Masculinity in Video Games and the Gaming Community, (Equimundo, 2021), <https://www.equimundo.org/resources/the-double-edged-sword-of-online-gaming-an-analysis-of-masculinity-in-video-games-and-the-gaming-community/>.

Mainstreaming male supremacy

Male supremacist ideas, once relegated to a niche corner of the internet, have become increasingly mainstream, with nearly two-thirds of young men in the United States reporting regular engagement with influencer content and 40 percent of men stating that they trust one or more "men's rights," antifeminist, or pro-violence voices from the manosphere.⁶⁸ Manosphere content is targeting increasingly younger men: in the U.S., as many as three quarters of boys between 11 and 17 years old regularly encounter posts related to masculinity, specifically focused on money, muscles, dating, fighting, and weapons.⁶⁹ Social media algorithms funnel manosphere content to young men even if they do not seek it out, with studies showing that accounts for young men are shown manosphere content in as little as 26 minutes following account creation.⁷⁰ With young men averaging between four and five hours a day on social media, algorithms that amplify outrage and extreme content have created a megaphone for male supremacy.⁷¹

The manosphere has increasingly mainstreamed male supremacy by extending its reach to popular platforms such as TikTok, while simultaneously growing on closed Telegram, Gab, and Discord communities. The manosphere has also grown beyond a primarily white male audience to include men from different ethnic and racial backgrounds and women who promote rigid gender norms and misogynistic ideologies.⁷² Manosphere ideas and sentiments increasingly circulate in the mainstream, from the call for "male standards" in the military to the tech sector's assertion that more "masculine energy" is needed in the corporate world.⁷³

Misogynistic and anti-feminist ideas in the manosphere have likely influenced Gen Z attitudes towards gender equality. In 2019, a third of Gen Z men believed that men faced discrimination. Four years later, 45% shared that belief.⁷⁴ Gen Z men are the first generation since at least the Baby Boomers to record lower support for feminism than the generation of men before them.⁷⁵ The gap between men and women who consider themselves feminists, which had shrunk with Gen X and Millennials, has now increased to its widest gap yet, with only 43% of Gen Z men considering themselves feminists, compared with 61% of Gen Z women.⁷⁶ The manosphere is a likely contributor to this trend, as influencers direct viewers to blame feminism women, LGBTQ+ communities, and feminism for the economic and relationship challenges men face.⁷⁷

80 Female Gamers Survey 2020, (Bryter, 2020), <https://pages.bryter-research.co.uk/hubfs/003-FGS-1603/Bryter%20-%20Female%20Gamers%20Survey%202020.pdf>.

81 Zachary Jason, "Game of Fear: The Rise of #Gamergate," Boston Magazine, April 28, 2015, <https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2015/04/28/gamergate/>.

82 Nick Wingfield, "Feminist Critics of Video Games Facing Threats in 'GamerGate' Campaign," The New York Times, October 15, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/16/technology/gamergate-women-video-game-threats-anita-sarkeesian.html>.

83 Kristin MS Bezio, "Ctrl-Alt-Del: GamerGate as a Precursor to the Rise of the Alt-Right," Leadership 14, no. 5 (2018): 556–566, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715018793744>; Matt Lees, "What Gamergate Should Have Taught Us about the 'Alt-Right,'" The Guardian, December 1, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/dec/01/gamergate-alt-right-hate-trump>.

84 Bezio, "Ctrl-Alt-Del," 556–566.

85 Elise R. Carrotte, et al., "Sexual Behaviors and Violence in Pornography: Systematic Review and Narrative Synthesis of Video Content Analyses," Journal of Medical Internet Research 22 no. 5 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.2196/16702>.

86 Janis Wolak et al., "Unwanted and Wanted Exposure to Online Pornography in a National Sample of Youth Internet Users," Pediatrics 119, no. 2 (2007): 247–57, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2006-1891>; Kimberly J. Mitchell et al., "Trends in Youth Reports of Sexual Solicitations, Harassment and Unwanted Exposure to Pornography on the Internet," The Journal of Adolescent Health: Official Publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine 40, no. 2 (2007): 116–126, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2006.05.021>.

87 "Teens and Pornography," Common Sense Media, January 10, 2023, <https://www.common Sense Media.org/research/teens-and-pornography>.

88 Carrotte et al., "Sexual Behaviors and Violence,,"; Kimberly J. Mitchell et al., "Trends in Youth Reports," 116–126; Eran Shor and Xuanchi Liu, "The Rise of Spanking, Hitting, and Strangulation: A Longitudinal Evaluation of Aggression in Pornography," The Journal of Sex Research 63, no. 4 (2026): 596–608, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2025.2565660>; "Male Supremacy"; Teens and Pornography, Common Sense Media; Fiona Vera-Gray et al., "Sexual Violence as a Sexual Script in Mainstream Online Pornography," The British Journal of Criminology 61, no. 5 (2021): 1243–1260, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab035>.

89 Shor and Liu, "The Rise of Spanking," 596–608.

90 Ibid.

91 Sarah M. Coyne et al., "Contributions of Mainstream Sexual Media Exposure to Sexual Attitudes, Perceived Peer Norms, and Sexual Behavior: A Meta-Analysis," Journal of Adolescent Health 64, no. 4 (2019): 430–436, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.11.016>; Helene Laporte et al., "Effects of Media on Sexual Behaviors," in The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology, ed. Jan van den Bulck, David r. Roskos-Ewoldsen, (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2020).

E-Sports and gaming

Video games are common spaces for young people to find community, develop teamwork, and connect with people online and in-person, with 97% of teen boys and 73% of teen girls identifying as players.⁷⁸ However, the language used in gaming spaces, both by streamers and in chat boxes, can promote misogynistic rhetoric and reinforce stereotypical ideas about masculinity, with one analysis finding that 63% of chat comments contained sexist language and 34% promoted violence within gameplay segments.⁷⁹ In 2020, 40% of female gamers reported verbal abuse from male players online and 35% reported being sent sexually explicit content.⁸⁰

#Gamergate

In 2014, an ex-boyfriend of a female game designer mobilized a mob of gamers to violently threaten and harass her.⁸¹ The decentralized harassment campaign quickly spread to target other women in the gaming industry. This event, termed #Gamergate, demonstrated how misogyny, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and other types of violence are intertwined. It also revealed the extent of the rampant misogyny in the gaming community. Exploiting sexism, racism, and grievance narratives around representation in video games, Gamergate mobilized online actors to harass, threaten, dox, and stalk female journalists and game developers.⁸² The Gamergate movement was a precursor to and model for contemporary supremacist movements.⁸³ A common refrain in misogynistic videogame spaces is a call for "Gamergate 2.0" and the removal of women and other marginalized groups from online and public spaces.⁸⁴

Violent pornography

Research has found gender inequality and misogyny is common in pornography, which has become free and ubiquitous.⁸⁵ Before entering college, most teens have consumed pornography, frequently after accidental exposure as early as 10 years of age.⁸⁶ In the absence of quality comprehensive sexual health education or guidance, many teens look online for answers to their questions and feel they find information they deem helpful about sex.⁸⁷

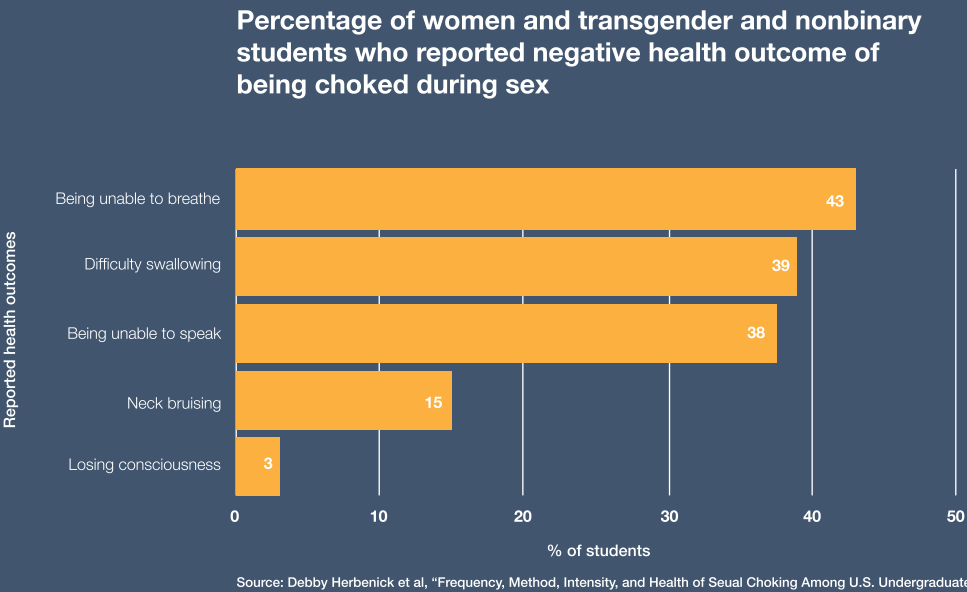
At a time when adolescents and young adults are still shaping their beliefs and understandings of sex and sexuality, pornography can play a role in molding their views on sexual practices and consent. Male supremacist ideas about aggression and control of women are visually portrayed in violent sexual scenes which reach millions of young men.⁸⁸ The prevalence of violence in pornography has increased, with aggression nearly tripling in a 25-year span through more depictions of hitting, spanking, and strangulation.⁸⁹ Half of teens in the study above reported seeing porn depicting violence, including rape and choking.⁹⁰ Pornography and media, including internet memes, have played a role in the normalization of choking in sexual activities, including internet memes such as those that promote "choking as sexy."⁹¹

92 Debby Herbenick et al., "Frequency, Method, Intensity, and Health Sequelae of Sexual Choking Among U.S. Undergraduate and Graduate Students," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 51, no. 6 (2022): 3121–3139, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-022-02347-y>.

93 Herbenick et al., "Frequency, Method, Intensity," 3121-3139.

Choking has become an increasingly common sexual practice among undergraduate students, reported by over half of women, a quarter of men, and more than half of transgender or non-binary students in 2022.⁹² A survey of undergraduate and graduate students found women and transgender and gender non-binary participants were significantly more likely to have been choked than men, with multiple negative health outcomes.⁹³

Figure 1. Percentage of women and transgender and nonbinary students reporting negative health outcomes when choked during sex in their lifetime



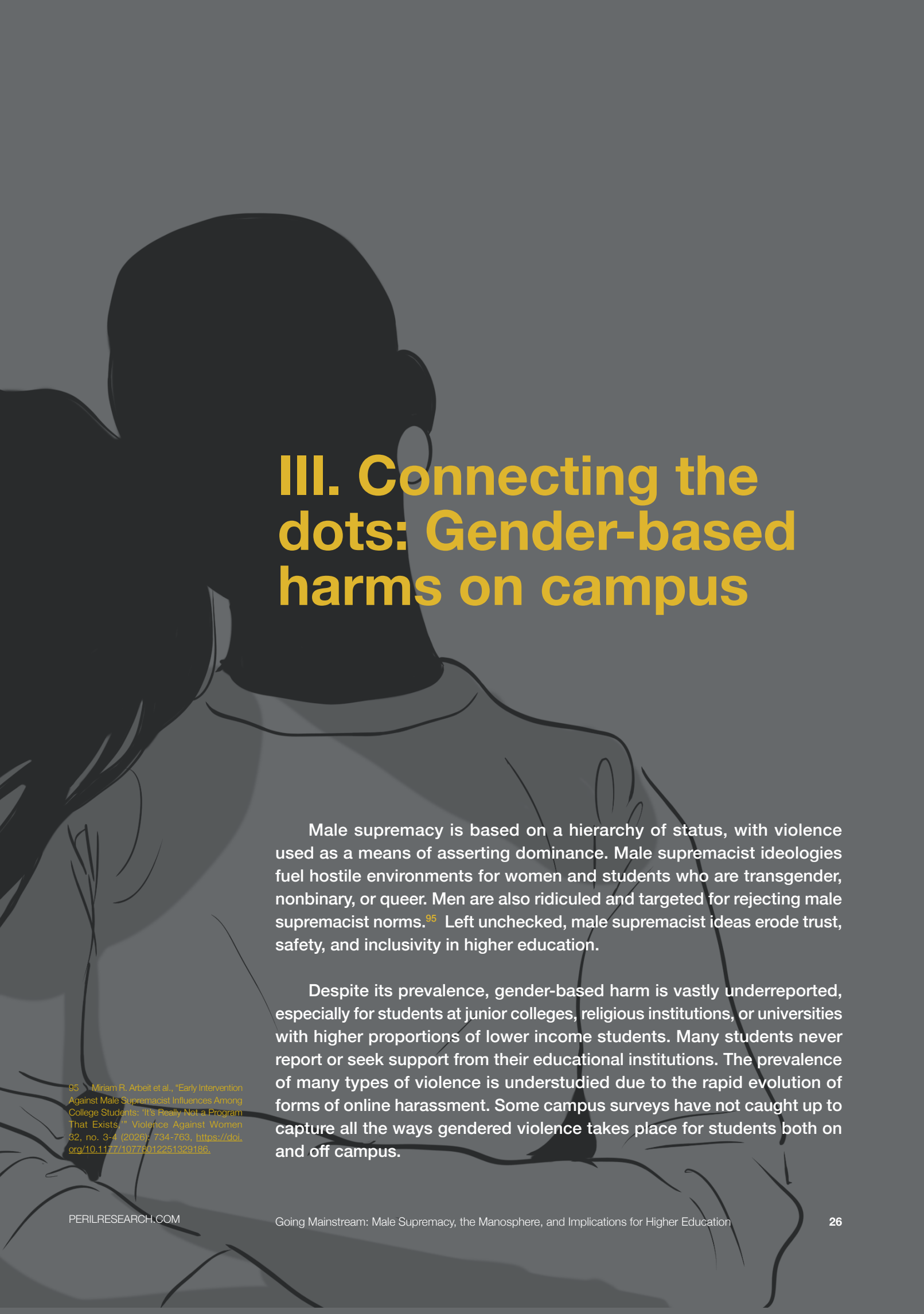
94 Anna Moore, "There Is No Safe Way to Do It": The Rapid Rise and Horrifying Risks of Choking during Sex," *The Guardian*, July 7, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2025/jul/07/no-safe-way-risks-of-choking-during-sex>; Helen Bichard et al., "The Neuropsychological Outcomes of Non-Fatal Strangulation in Domestic and Sexual Violence: A Systematic Review," *Neuropsychological Rehabilitation* 30, no. 6 (2022): 1164-1192, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09602011.2020.1868537>; "What Is the Danger Assessment?" *Danger Assessment*, accessed April 14, 2026, <https://www.dangerassessment.org/about.aspx>.

While there are many factors that have shaped the rise of choking during sex that require more research to understand, sexual strangulation is considered a high-risk activity, with no safe way to do so. Choking is considered a critical lethality risk factor for intimate partner homicide, and police, service providers, and advocates often use choking to assess risk for homicide. Strangulation is now the second most common cause of strokes for women under 40 and can lead to serious negative cognitive, neurological, and psychological outcomes, including death.⁹⁴

In brief

- By the time young men enter college, most will have interacted with misogynistic content and harmful gender norms through the manosphere, gaming, social media, or pornography.
- Online influencers and social media algorithms increasingly promote manosphere content to young men, often leveraging their insecurities about dating and self-esteem to sell products on fitness, dating, and finances, while blaming feminism, women, and LGBTQ+ people for the modern challenges men face.
- Male supremacy and misogyny are increasingly mainstream and often presented as “harmless” through humor and irony.
- After decades of progress in gender equality, Gen Z men have lower support for feminism than Millennial men.
- Gaming spaces provide users with a sense of community but often feature misogyny. A third of female gamers have reported encountering sexual harassment in gaming spaces.
- Most teens entering college have encountered pornography online. Pornography has become nearly three times as violent over a 25-year span.





III. Connecting the dots: Gender-based harms on campus

Male supremacy is based on a hierarchy of status, with violence used as a means of asserting dominance. Male supremacist ideologies fuel hostile environments for women and students who are transgender, nonbinary, or queer. Men are also ridiculed and targeted for rejecting male supremacist norms.⁹⁵ Left unchecked, male supremacist ideas erode trust, safety, and inclusivity in higher education.

Despite its prevalence, gender-based harm is vastly underreported, especially for students at junior colleges, religious institutions, or universities with higher proportions of lower income students. Many students never report or seek support from their educational institutions. The prevalence of many types of violence is understudied due to the rapid evolution of forms of online harassment. Some campus surveys have not caught up to capture all the ways gendered violence takes place for students both on and off campus.

⁹⁵ Miriam R. Arbeit et al., "Early Intervention Against Male Supremacist Influences Among College Students: 'It's Really Not a Program That Exists,'" *Violence Against Women* 32, no. 3-4 (2026): 734-763, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012251329186>.

96 Cantor et al., AAU Campus Climate Survey.

97 Ibid.

98 Robert W. S. Coulter et al., "Prevalence of Past-Year Sexual Assault Victimization Among Undergraduate Students: Exploring Differences by and Intersections of Gender Identity, Sexual Identity, and Race/Ethnicity," *Prevention Science* 18, no. 6 (2017): 726–36, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0762-8>.

99 Sarah Beshers and Margaret DiVita, "Changes in Rape Myth Acceptance Among Undergraduates: 2010 to 2017," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 36, nos. 19–20 (2021): 9371–92, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519867153>; Jacquelyn D. Wiersma-Mosley and Kristen N. Jozkowski, "A Brief Report of Sexual Violence among Universities with NCAA Division I Athletic Programs," *Behavioral Sciences* 9, no. 2 (2019): 17, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs9020017>.

100 Sharp et al., "A Systematic Qualitative Review," 133–167.

101 Sarah K. Murnen et al., "If 'Boys Will Be Boys,' Then Girls Will Be Victims? A Meta-Analytic Review of the Research That Relates Masculine Ideology to Sexual Aggression," *Sex Roles* 46, nos. 11–12 (2002): 359–75, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020488928736>.

102 Gerd Bohner et al., "Social Norms and the Likelihood of Raping: Perceived Rape Myth Acceptance of Others Affects Men's Rape Proclivity," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32, no. 3 (2006): 286–97, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205280912>.

103 Sarah K. Murnen and Marla H. Kohlman, "Athletic Participation, Fraternity Membership, and Sexual Aggression Among College Men: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Sex Roles* 57, no. 1 (2007): 145–57, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9225-1>; Rita C. Seabrook et al., "Why Is Fraternity Membership Associated with Sexual Assault? Exploring the Roles of Conformity to Masculine Norms, Pressure to Uphold Masculinity, and Objectification of Women," *Psychology of Men & Masculinity (US)* 19, no. 1 (2018): 3–13, <https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000076>.

104 Cantor, et al., AAU Campus Climate Survey.

105 Coulter, Robert W. S., Christina Mair, Elizabeth Miller, John R. Blosnich, Derrick D. Matthews, and Heather L. McCauley. "Prevalence of Past-Year Sexual Assault Victimization Among Undergraduate Students: Exploring Differences by and Intersections of Gender Identity, Sexual Identity, and Race/Ethnicity." *Prevention Science* 18, no. 6 (2017): 726–736. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0762-8>.

Prevalence of sexual violence and intimate partner violence on campus

While the rates of gender-based violence on campus are high across all genders, there are differences in perceptions of the issue: some students are more likely to report that sexual assault and misconduct is either extremely or very problematic at their school with undergraduate women (**36%**), graduate women (**38%**) and TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, nonconforming, and/or questioning) students (**44.8%**) more likely to identify it as a problem than undergraduate men (**20%**) and graduate men (**15%**).⁹⁶ The students with the highest concern about likelihood of future assault or misconduct were undergraduate women (**14.4%**) and undergraduate TGQN students (**18.4%**).⁹⁷ Research has also shown that students of color experience higher rates of sexual assault victimization than their white peers.⁹⁸

Sexual assault and dating and intimate partner violence impact students personally and academically. Female students who experience rape are more likely to record declines in academic performance and severe mental health impacts, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, and suicidal thoughts.⁹⁹

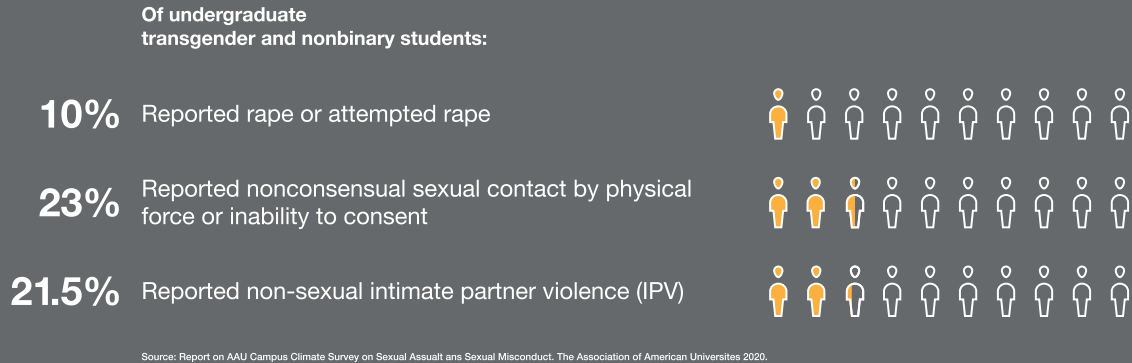
Harmful norms around masculinity and femininity, such as those promoted in the manosphere, are associated with increased risk of perpetration of sexual violence.¹⁰⁰ Many studies have found that gender norms that promote male aggression and hostile beliefs toward women are associated with sexual violence perpetration and lower likelihood of asking for sexual consent.¹⁰¹ Studies have also examined how men are influenced by peer beliefs, and one study found that in efforts to demonstrate masculinity to peers, undergraduate men may be more willing to commit sexual assault when they think that their peers believe false ideas about rape, such as those that blame the victim.¹⁰² When male groups like fraternities or athletic groups promote hypermasculine identity, members appear to be more vulnerable to believing rape myths and being dismissive of sexual violence.¹⁰³

Undergraduate women and transgender and nonbinary students are at highest risk for sexual assault.¹⁰⁴ Black students and those who self-identify as "other race/ethnicity" have historically had the highest levels of assault victimization of racial and ethnic groups.¹⁰⁵

Figure 2. Reports of gender-based violence among undergraduate women in 2019



Figure 3. Percentage of undergraduate students reporting harassment and stalking



106 Botto and Gottzén, "Swallowing and Spitting out the Red Pill," 596-608; Lise Gotell and Emily Dutton, "Sexual Violence in the 'Manosphere': Antifeminist Men's Rights Discourses on Rape," *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 5, no. 2 (2016): 65-80, <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcsd.v5i2.310>.

Male supremacist narratives online often exacerbate issues of victim blaming by casting doubt on rates of sexual assault among women and asserting that the numbers are being fabricated to invoke a "moral panic."¹⁰⁶ By promoting rape myths and supporting tropes that claim victims are either lying or at fault for experiencing abuse, male supremacist narratives online, including the manosphere, strengthens a culture that enables sexual violence on and off campus.

107 Cantor et al., AAU Campus Climate Survey.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.

110 Meredith McGinley, Jennifer M. Wolff, Kathleen M. Rospenda, Li Liu, and Judith A. Richman, "Risk Factors and Outcomes of Chronic Sexual Harassment during the Transition to College: Examination of a Two-Part Growth Mixture Model," *Social Science Research* 60 (2016): 297–310. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.04.002>.

111 Nancy Chi Cantalupo, "And Even More of Us Are Brave: Intersectionality & Sexual Harassment of Women Students of Color," *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender* 42, no. 1 (2019): 1–82.

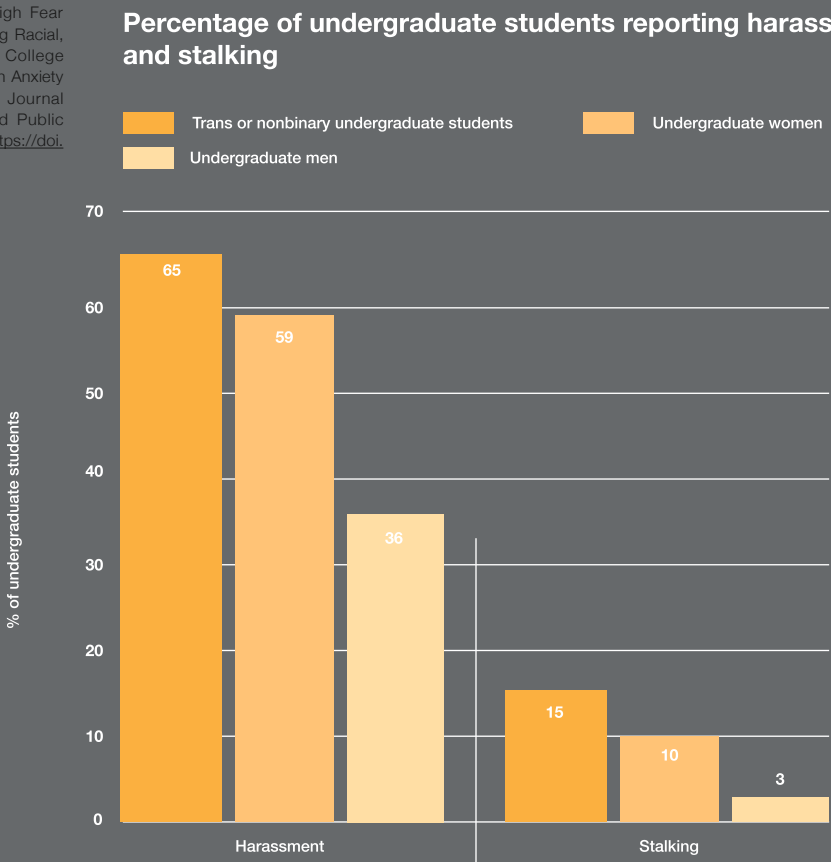
112 Cantor et al., AAU Campus Climate Survey.

113 Erin Grinshteyn et al., "High Fear of Discriminatory Violence among Racial, Gender, and Sexual Minority College Students and Its Association with Anxiety and Depression," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 4 (2022): 2117, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19042117>.

Studies show that 10 percent of undergraduate men report intimate partner violence.¹⁰⁷ Nearly seven percent of undergraduate men report nonconsensual sexual contact, with two thirds of perpetrators being women and a third being other men.¹⁰⁸ Men often face additional barriers in reporting, including stigma, the role of social and gender norms, shame related to fears of emasculation and showing vulnerability, and support services often designed for survivors who are women.

Sexual harassment and discrimination

Figure 4. Percentage of undergraduate students reporting harassment and stalking in their college career



Source: AAU Campus Climate Survey (2019) - Association of American Universities.

A majority of undergraduate women and trans or nonbinary students report harassment.¹⁰⁹ Research has found that a third of students experience chronic, ongoing harassment that increases the likelihood of depression, anxiety, and substance use as a coping mechanism.¹¹⁰ Students who are women of color are at higher risk for racialized forms of sexual harassment.¹¹¹ Students are also indirectly affected—surveys of students show seven percent report seeing sexually harassing behavior and 26 percent report observing someone making sexual comments that led to others feeling uncomfortable or offended.¹¹² Harassment and fear of discrimination have been associated with increased anxiety and depression in LGBTQ+ college students.¹¹³

114 Troy Heffernan, "Abusive Comments in Student Evaluations of Courses and Teaching: The Attacks Women and Marginalised Academics Endure," *Higher Education* 85, no. 1 (2023): 225–239, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00831-x>.

115 Jonathan Mahler, "Who Spewed That Abuse? Anonymous Yik Yak App Isn't Telling," *The New York Times*, March 8, 2015 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/09/technology/popular-yik-yak-app-confers-anonymity-and-delivers-abuse.html>.

116 O'Rourke, Baker and McCashin, *Addressing the Impact of Masculinity Influencers*.

Harassment of faculty and staff

While this publication focuses on the student experience, gender-based harassment and sexual violence also affect female and LGBTQ+ faculty and staff, both on- and offline. One study examining student evaluations found that "the highest volume, most derogatory, and most threatening abuse is directed towards women academics and academics from marginalized groups."¹¹⁴ In particular, negative student evaluations are a salient concern for professors, especially those who are not tenured. Such harassment not only affects the instructor's mental health and well-being but threatens career advancement as well. There have also been cases of female professors being sexually harassed online by their students.¹¹⁵ Such harassment has been documented around the globe—studies in Ireland, the UK, and Australia have found that online misogynist content is negatively influencing how boys relate to women teachers and leading to instances of students harassing female teachers in the classroom.¹¹⁶



Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)

Gender-based harassment and abuse enabled by technology—known as technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV)—has grown alongside quickly evolving and unregulated social media platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) technology. TFGBV can cause emotional, physical, social, sexual, and financial harm and happens between current or past intimate partners, peers, or strangers. Common forms of TFGBV include:

Nonconsensual distribution of intimate images, or so-called “revenge pornography,” is the most well-known example. This type of abuse is a common form of intimate partner violence.

- **Sextortion** blackmails others with the threat of sharing sexually intimate photos or material.
- **AI deepfake pornography and nudify apps** involve nonconsensual use of a person’s photo to create deepfake nude photos and videos for distribution.
- **“Slutpages”** are shared pages or listservs in which users nonconsensually share sexual images, often of other students on campus.

Doxxing involves sharing personal information online without a person’s permission, such as a phone number, email or home address, which enables multiple people to harass and threaten the individual and often includes threats of physical harm, including rape.

Threats of violence include numerous accounts of threats of rape and mass violence on campuses on apps such as Yik Yak, whose anonymous posts enable users to create misogynistic and racist posts.¹¹⁷

Threatening to out someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity online is a common form of intimate partner violence, often used to control and threaten them into staying in the relationship. This behavior can also take place outside of an intimate partner relationship.

Brigading is a form of digital harassment where a coordinated mass influx of users—typically from outside a particular online community—deliberately flood that community with downvotes, disruptive comments, or other actions intended to manipulate its normal dynamics and suppress certain content or voices. In the context of TFGBV, brigading can take the form of harassing communities based on gender or sexuality.

TFGBV has many serious consequences, including tolls on emotional and physical health, leading to increased depression and substance use.¹¹⁸ There can also be financial implications, with many survivors having to incur costs to delete their online data. Finally, TFGBV holds reputational costs in educational, professional, and other sectors.

119 Baele et al., "From 'Incel' to 'Saint'"; "Incels," Institute for Strategic Dialogue; Andrew Theen, "Umpqua Community College Shooting: Killer's Manifesto Reveals Racist, Satanic Views," OregonLive, September 8, 2017 <https://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/2017/09/umpqua-community-college-shoot-3.html>; Dean C. Alexander and Dominic Lesniewski, "The Violent Fringe of the Incel Movement," Police 1, <https://www.police1.com/mass-casualty/articles/the-violent-fringe-of-the-incele-movement-M2E5rIB5BYTDesoL/>; Adam Bodner, "What Causes Men to Adopt Incel Ideology?" (PhD diss., The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2024), ProQuest 31483087.

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Extremist violence targeting higher education

In the most extreme cases, male supremacist ideology has led to targeted and mass violence. Violent male supremacists have targeted women and students at several higher education campuses, killing nine people at Umpqua Community College in 2015, six people in 2014 at the University of California at Santa Barbara, 33 people at Virginia Tech in 2007, and 14 women at École Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989.¹¹⁹ In 2021, law enforcement stopped an attempted mass shooting at Ohio State University by a prominent poster on incel forums.¹²⁰ Perpetrators of these mass killings blamed feminism for their inability to find a romantic partner and expressed violent misogyny.¹²¹



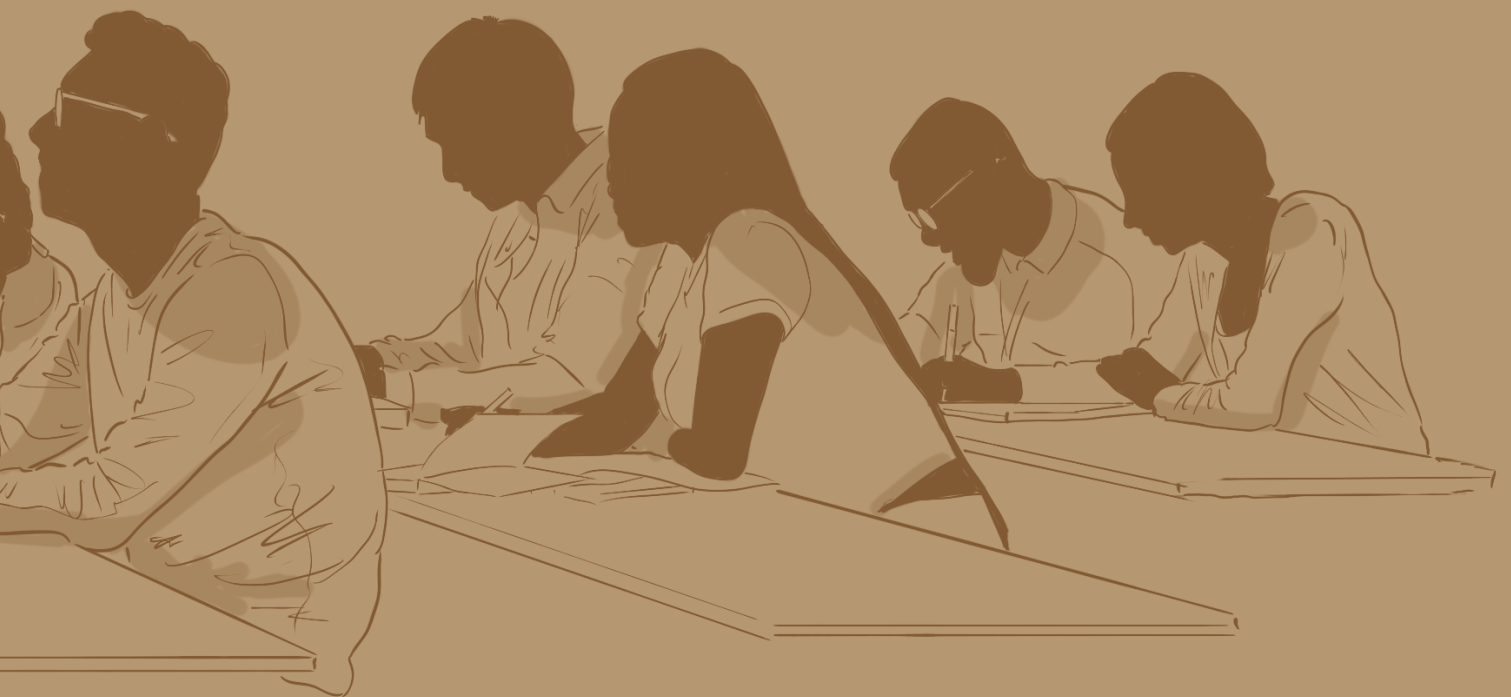
In brief

- Male supremacist ideologies fuel hostile environments for women and LGBTQ+ students.
- Rates of gender-based violence and harassment on college and university campuses are significant, with undergraduate women as a whole, specifically women of color, and nonbinary and transgender students experiencing especially high rates. Women and LGBTQ+ faculty also experience gendered harms and harassment both on-and offline.
- The rise of the internet, especially social media and AI, has introduced new methods of technology facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), including nonconsensual distribution of intimate images, doxxing, and online harassment. TFGBV has many harmful impacts on physical and mental health, as well as negative financial, professional, and educational consequences.
- Violent male supremacists have committed four mass shootings on four college campuses since 1989, killing more than 60 people.





IV. The role of higher education in addressing male supremacy



Male supremacist rhetoric expressed and enacted online does not remain confined to digital spaces. It inevitably spills over into real-world environments, including college campuses, where it impacts student culture, classroom dynamics, and even institutional policies. College-aged men are a key demographic for male supremacist influencers, as they are navigating identity formation and social hierarchies during a transitional life stage.¹²²

¹²² Botto and Gottzén, "Swallowing and Spitting out the Red Pill," 596-608.

The growing influence of male supremacist ideology on campus communities impacts academic and campus culture on an individual, community, and institutional level. Male supremacy ideology often compels adherents to retreat into online male supremacist spaces, pull away from friends or family that do not endorse the same conspiratorial beliefs, and reject educational standards around equal access to safe educational spaces.

Universities have the ability and responsibility to create healthy campus cultures and to explicitly establish norms and values that guide and structure interactions and engagements on campus. They can promote campus cultures that protect and empower all students, regardless of identity or affiliation. Research supports the importance of engaging with fraternities and male athletics teams to foster equitable gender norms and challenge attitudes supportive of sexual violence, hypermasculinity, and hostility and objectification of women.¹²³

Faculty and staff can be trusted advisors to students who require models and mentors as well as connection and care beyond what they are receiving online. Further, faculty and staff can learn to recognize male supremacist rhetoric and warning signs that a student is engaging with harmful content. While much of the rhetoric emanating from the manosphere is intentionally confrontational, the motivation behind some students who are echoing these sentiments is to challenge professors and peers to provide answers to genuine questions or concerns about dating, identity, and mental health. Being able to carefully and thoughtfully discuss issues with students in ways that encourage openness and honesty, rather than shame, creates possibilities for student learning and growth and can help buffer against the messages men are receiving online.

Understanding the connections between gender-based harms and violent extremism underscores the importance of addressing their effects on campus life. When harmful rhetoric reaches higher education communities, students look to campus administration to affirm their safety. When unaddressed, ideologies that place one group as superior and deserving of dominance over another risk emboldening students on campus who may already be harboring these views but now feel it acceptable to act on them. When the window of acceptable political ideas shifts, beliefs that were once considered radical are now considered reasonable subjects of discourse. Whether harmful rhetoric or behavior happens in classrooms, residential life, clubs, or at events, it deserves attention in the interests of creating a safe and healthy learning and living environment for all.

In brief

- While much male supremacist rhetoric exists online, it often spills over into real-world environments. College-aged men are a key audience for male supremacist influencers, as they are entering a transitional life stage and are often looking for guidance on relationships, finance, and identity.
- Universities have the responsibility to create a healthy campus culture and explicitly establish norms and values that affirm everyone's right to a safe educational environment, regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation, among other identities.
- Campus communities should be prepared to address harmful misogynistic rhetoric when it manifests. Ignoring harmful rhetoric risks normalizing supremacist ideologies.
- Campus leaders can create safe academic environments by reaffirming campus norms and values and by engaging in respectful discussions about dating, mental health, and identity, subjects that are frequently coopted to promote male supremacist rhetoric and gender-based harms.

Recommendations for higher education staff and faculty

Higher education institutions have a responsibility to create campuses that are safe and conducive to learning for all students. Understanding and addressing male supremacist ideology on campus is part of that responsibility. Promoting positive gender norms and respectful relationships creates a safer campus climate and fosters an academic environment where all students can succeed. Campus communities can respond to gender-based harms and harmful narratives while protecting free academic inquiry, community cohesion, and reinforcing shared norms and values.

Key questions to ask

We invite readers to reflect on this report and your own position within your campus community to consider the following questions:

- What do you need in your role to feel equipped to address gender-based harms and extremist narratives on campus?
- What actions—big or small—can you take to create safer, more inclusive spaces for students and colleagues?
- How can you collaborate with others on campus to strengthen networks of support and resilience?

These questions are intended to spark reflection and dialogue about your unique role in fostering a healthy and safer campus environment. They can help frame ongoing reforms, including recommendations listed below.

Preventing gender-based harms

- **Reaffirm campus values of respect and dignity for all:** Assert inclusivity and civility as campus norms in order to create safe and inclusive learning communities, guaranteed by Title VI and Title IX protections to equal access to education.
- **Promote existing resources and support:** Educate the campus community on existing campus resources to support students. Ensure that students are informed of the resources available to them, such as resident advisors, the Title IX office, on and off-campus victim advocacy resources, ombudsman, and free mental health counseling.
- **Train and provide professional development:** Provide training on recognizing male supremacist ideology, including racialized male supremacy targeting students of color, effective strategies for countering it when it appears, and referral resources for when staff and faculty are concerned a student is engaging with extremist or violent ideologies.

- **Build campus prevention and response networks:** Connect students, staff, faculty, and administrators to develop strategies to address gender-based harms and male supremacy and extremism on and off campus. For example, convene a working group that includes range of partners, including public safety, counseling, student leaders, residential life, deans, and Greek life, to identify, prevent, mitigate and respond to harms among the campus community.
- **Increase awareness of and update policies on online conduct on campus:** Talk to students, particularly women, specifically students of color, and LGBTQ+ students about their experiences of online harassment. Promote respectful online conduct and work with leadership on campus to update university conduct codes and policies regarding online harms. Ensure that TFGBV is recognized under the Title IX policy.
- **Ensure gender-based violence prevention policy includes online harms:** Make certain that all violence prevention strategies include a focus on preventing and interrupting online harm. This can include social norms work and bystander intervention.
- **Ensure that sexual and intimate partner violence prevention work includes work on men's engagement:** Ensure there is tailored, evidence-based programming for young men on campuses and work with male campus leaders to co-design programming. Violence prevention staff can collaborate with internal and external partners to help hone expertise on best practices in engaging men in violence prevention efforts.
- **Support positive gaming culture with staff involvement:** For example, host an e-sports club with faculty or staff involvement.
- **Involve and educate student organizations:** Ensure student organizations include bylaws that address online harms. Support programming in existing clubs and campus communities such as fraternities and athletics teams to promote positive gender norms and relations.

Responding to gender-based harms

- **Support affected students:** Connect victim-survivors to trauma-informed resources. Listen to the student and ask what support they need. Discuss with the students what they would like to do next, how you can help advocate for them, and whether they are comfortable with you sharing and reporting the incident. If you are considered a Responsible Employee or Mandated Reporter, make sure to share your reporting obligations before a student discloses so they have informed consent about what will happen if they disclose. Remind students about confidential resources on campus, including counseling and victim advocacy services. More guidance for supporting affected students is available in the Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities of Knowledge (BRICK) Toolkit, accessible at www.perilresearch.com/resources.
- **Review and strengthen reporting mechanisms:** Create mechanisms such as hotlines or tiplines to encourage students to communicate with university administration about worrisome behavior or incidents. Establish or strengthen protocols for collecting, investigating, and responding to gender-based harassment and harm directed at faculty and staff, via emails, voicemails, or other forms of stalking and harassment. Raise awareness about reporting mechanisms for students, faculty, and staff, including any updates or revisions.



- **Integrate conversations surrounding online harms into first year programs:** Ensure orientation programs inform students about harassment policies and reporting mechanisms and emphasize that campus norms of respect and inclusion apply online. Orient new students to available campus resources to prevent and address gender-based harms, including TFGBV. Train faculty, staff, and residential advisors in how to respond to concerns from students.
- **Respond immediately to hate by leaning into campus values:** Share campus mission statements and other authorized statements from the university affirming equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination as core values of an academic community. More strategies for responding to hate incidents are available in the Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities of Knowledge (BRICK) Toolkit, accessible at www.perilresearch.com/resources.



Conclusion

Addressing and preventing gender-based harms requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach across higher education. Everyone can play a part in addressing, preventing, mitigating, and responding to gender-based harms. Additional ideas about how administrators, faculty, staff and students can respond to extremist harms and build healthier, more resilient learning communities are available in the Building Resilient and Inclusive Communities of Knowledge (BRICK) Toolkit, accessible at www.perilresearch.com/resources. If any of your reflections lead to an idea or practice you are excited about, we'd love to hear from you—feel free to share your thoughts with us at peril@american.edu and continue the dialogue.



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