BOYS (AS) RESPONSIBLE ALLIES AGAINST VIOLENCE ONLINE (BRAVO)

BRAVO RESEARCH FINDINGS



Funded by UKRI's SPRITE+ RISE programme, **Boys (as) responsible allies against violence online (BRAVO): The Future Digital Leaders programme** is an arts-based secondary school intervention engaging young men and boys aged 13-16 years old, in a series of creative workshops, to explore how young men and boys make sense of and negotiate everyday online violence against women and girls (OVAWG).

UNDERSTANDING YOUNG PEOPLE'S ONLINE EXPERIENCES

Young people lead rich and highly connected lives online, moving across multiple platforms to learn, communicate, build friendships and communities. Social media and digital platforms are important spaces in which young people express themselves, while also developing and negotiating ideas about gender, identity, and relationships. These digital spaces offer opportunities for connection, creativity and belonging, but they can also contribute to the normalisation of problematic and harmful content.

WHAT CONTENT DO THEY COME ACROSS?



Misogynistic narratives, rigid gender stereotypes and appearance-focused cultures can be encountered repeatedly, embedded within humour, entertainment, influencer content and peer expectations, making them harder to recognise as harmful and easier to interpet as normal or expected.

The growth of **looksmaxxing** serves as an example. Looksmaxing encompasses a range of practices aimed at improving someone's physical attractiveness. Primarily originating in online manosphere forums, it has now become a popular social media trend, primarily popular among young men and teenage boys.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Our findings highlight how manosphere-originated vocabulary becomes streamlined and normalised through social media, gaming platforms, memes and peer interactions, thereby becoming part of young people's everyday vocabulary as something playful and seemingly harmless, while still carrying particular understandings of masculinity as associated with dominance, desirability, or competition.

At the same times, it is important not to assume that exposure automatically produces harmful attitudes. Our research with young men and boys highlights the active ways in which they navigate and make sense of these environments.

SUPPORTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALLYSHIP AGAINST OVAWG

Young men can question, reject, reinterpret or resist misogynistic and stereotypical content, while emphasising the need to 'be kind' online and calling for more effective moderation and reliable reporting systems. BRAVO recognises young men and boys' existing capacities for allyship, prioritising critical digital literacy and digital citizenship approaches over restrictive or deficit-based interventions, and supporting educators to understand contemporary manifestations of online misogyny, including evolving online terminology, influencer cultures, and platform dynamics.

Our **BRAVO teaching guides and learning material** for young people, parents/carers and educators, draw on young men and boy's digital agency, expertise, and best practice to support meaningful prevention, in an informed and empowering way.

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