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Michaela Stephanie Huber, Bakk.phil.

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Introduction

This research paper aims to discuss how and if online social movements play an important factor in changing mainstream discourses and debates about political issues and ideologies, using the example of an online social movement called “Women Against Feminism” and their views about the political ideology of modern feminism. By analyzing an online social movement that is comprised of an array of different women and their overtly negative view of an ideology, that claims to want to support and help them, I want to present and discuss a side of non-extremist criticism that is not included in today’s mainstream discourse about feminism.

Feminism is and always has been a very disputed subject. In the past its opponents were mostly men, who tried to maintain a status quo, which meant not giving women certain rights, such as the right to vote. Nowadays, the whole situation is quite different though. When considering Western society, women legally have the same rights as men. Women are allowed to vote, they can get the same education as men, choose their own field of work, and basically do with their lives as they please. In this sense, a lot has changed for women since the suffragette movement in the early 1900s, when women were fighting tough battles to be viewed as full members of society with a voice of their own. Some people, especially from younger generations, might take the successes feminists achieved over the years for granted. Of course, women should have the same rights as men, get paid the same amount of money for the same job, not be dismissed for positions just because of their gender and not be violated physically or emotionally by men, just because they are women. After all, we are all just humans. Most people, men as well as women, with moral standards and an open mind would definitely agree with those general statements, as it is common sense. However, would all of those people, who agree with this, also label

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themselves a feminist? The answer is No. Only about 18 – 20 % of Americans defined themselves as feminist in two studies from Huff Post/YouGov and PerryUndem (Swanson, 2013; PerryUndem, 2015), even though an overwhelming majority found it to be true that our society still has a long way to go until men and women are truly equals.

Why is this relevant for our society though? Violence against women and girls, sexism, as well as prejudices still exist all over the world. With all due respect to cultural differences concerning different views of men and women, human rights, as well as the right to feel safe and not be discriminated against because of someone's gender are beyond discussion. This should include the issues *all* people face, not just women, for our society, as modern as it likes to see itself, faces plentiful of inequalities that seriously affect people's lives in a negative way.

Feminism, however, does not have very broad support in the Western population. Instead, it is often being ridiculed and declared unnecessary, but it is also being criticized for a reason. The criticism from the online social movement of "Women Against Feminism" ought to show how this important cause for equality might have morphed into a political ideology, which cares more about self-dramatization and its members, than its original cause. Celebrities who declare themselves non-feminist ("Female celebs who don't understand feminism", n.d.; "Female celebrities who've badmouthed feminism", 2015) and movements against feminism ruin an array of good causes in the name of feminism. If the debate and discourse about feminism would finally allow some criticism and obtain the ability of self-reflection, it might be able to make some changes and come out stronger and with more support, so it can continue to help work for a world in which mutual respect and appreciation are considered the norm. Merely telling women, they must be "confused" (*Suggest*, 2015) or they "do not understand the true meaning" of feminism (Thorpe, 2015), as soon as they criticize it, is neither very constructive nor convincing.

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In this research paper I will analyze the Facebook page of an American social movement “Women Against Feminism” (WAF) whose members are women who speak out against feminism. I will aspire to determine how their discourse about feminism is shaped, how they see modern day feminism, and what makes them publicly take a stance against this ideology. In order to understand, why they are against feminism, I will give an overview over the history of feminism in the United States, so as to define the term and what is understood by it. Then, I will focus on theoretical concepts of antifeminism and attempt to classify WAF in this context. In chapter four, I will explain what the scientific background on political communication for this thesis is and how WAF is being defined as a social movement. The remaining chapters will deal with the methodology and research design, which entails a computer-assisted qualitative content analysis and the gathered results, as well as the interpretation and discussion of said results.

THEORY AND LITERATURE

What is feminism? This question, as simple as it may seem, is not easily answered. Naturally, there is a dictionary definition which states feminism as “The advocacy of women’s rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men.” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015), but because there are different viewpoints on what feminism is and, since what it means to a person is highly individual, it is more complex than that. Hence, in the following chapter I will give an overview of feminism or more precisely the women’s movement in the U.S. and its history, for it seems to be the best way to define it. Since this is a very widespread topic with a large amount of different angles, I decided to focus on literature that was designed to be used as course or class material. This will provide the following section with the most important facts, as well as a fairly straightforward understanding of the complex history of feminism, which is why R. Dicker and N. MacLean

are the most relied upon sources in the next chapter.

1 The history of feminism and the women's rights movement in the United States

Without the understanding of the history of feminism and the women's rights movement the critique and defying of said ideology or movement is without rhyme and reason. One of the most common arguments against antifeminists or people in general who oppose feminism, is that they do not know its history. For this reason, a synopsis and an overview of the origins of the women's movement in the U.S now follows.

1.1 First wave feminism - The fight for the vote

In the late 18th and early 19th century, the social and legal position of women was almost unimaginable compared to today. The luckier white women of the middle class had little if any access to education which customarily ended after a handful of years. During that time women were taught how to read and write and had to learn how to be a proper housewife. Once a woman got married, she gave herself, her legal identity, and her body up completely: she would lose her maiden name, she would no longer be able to hold her own property including wages for paid work, and she would not be able to enter a contract or sue someone. A single woman still had these rights, but was looked down upon from society. In marriage, a woman was expected to attend to her husband's sexual desires; she was found to have no sexuality of her own; since there was no reliable birth control she would often be pregnant (the average woman in 1800 had around 7 children); she was expected to live under her husband's rules and accept his punishments; her husband could even beat her and rape her and there was not much she could do. If she was lucky enough to divorce an abusive husband, in all likelihood, he would get full custody of the children. Were she to disagree with any of those rules or customs there was nothing she could do to change the system, because she was not allowed to vote. (Dicker, 2008) That was the bright side of life, which stands in no comparison to how hard it was for working-class women.

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The way women were viewed by society was quite ridiculous.

Brainy women faced ostracism because, according to prevailing beliefs, their intellectual efforts sapped them of the energy their uteruses would need to function. Proper women were expected to adhere to the four tenets of what the historian Barbara Welter has referred to as the 'cult of womanhood': piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness. (Dicker, 2008, p.21f)

It should come as no surprise, that at some point women of that time realized they had had enough of this hierarchy and started questioning their rights and roles in society. After all no man would ever willingly live under such circumstances and requirements. It was a very slow process of realization though and long before women even considered having the right to vote, the "first aspect of broader rights and opportunities for women to become a matter of importance was that of education." (Flexner, 1982, p.15) Access to education was the stepping stone for women and found its first expression in the writings of Judith Sargent Murray, who wrote on the behalf of women around ten years before Mary Wollstonecraft published her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in England in 1792, which marks the date for the start of the modern women's movement (Flexner, 1982).

At that time, however, women were not even allowed to speak in public places or churches. The limitations such rules inflicted on women became very clear in the anti-slavery movement, also known as abolitionism.

It was in the abolition movement that women first learned to organize, to hold public meetings, to conduct petition campaigns. As abolitionists they first won the right to speak in public, and began to evolve a philosophy of their place in society and of their basic rights. For a quarter of a century the two movements, to free the slave and liberate the woman, nourished and strengthened one another. (Flexner, 1982, p.41)

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In fact, the two women who first spoke in numerous public places on behalf of the anti-slavery movement were Sarah and Angelina Grimké. Two sisters from a South Carolina slaveholding family, who both despised slavery from the very beginning and therefore moved to Philadelphia in the 1820s, joined the Quakers, and started speaking as well as writing on behalf of the abolitionist movement. The Grimké sisters were met with extremely hostile reactions from both the media and the church. After being attacked in a pastoral letter from the Council of Congregationalist Ministers of Massachusetts, stating their behavior to be unwomanly and unchristian, Sarah Grimké wrote in one letter to Mary S. Parker, President of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society: “But I ask no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is that they will take their feet from off our necks, and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designed us to occupy.” (1837, n.p.)

By midcentury, it became more common for women to speak in public and they had started to heavily consider their own rights as a result of taking part in the discussions about human rights, justice, liberty and equality concerning slavery. On July 19th, 1848 the Seneca Falls Convention took place, with Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton as the two women who initiated it. They wrote a Declaration of Sentiments, which was based on the Declaration of Independence and a set of resolutions which was discussed by the attendees, and was seen as the starting point of the movement for woman suffrage. (Dicker, 2008)

The work they did for the abolition movement also prepared future woman’s rights activists to handle opposition and headwind to a cause that would not be favored by a majority of society. “Unlike more mainstream temperance reform, which also gave women experience in activism, antislavery work readied women for the hostile reactions of a public unprepared for a new way of thinking about women and their rights.” (Dicker, 2008, p.29)

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All in all, it was a long fight before women were finally granted the right to vote. Even though it was sped up by the circumstances of World War I, it took over 70 years before the final ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment took place in 1920.

Even back then, the women's movement faced critique from within their own ranks, especially from black and colored women, who were excluded at first from the fight for suffrage. The white middle-class women who fought for suffrage, were not interested in helping black women gain voting rights. They considered it important for politics to include women who were educated, middle class and white (Shafer Goodstein, 1998). The stigma of being a movement only for white middle-class women clings to feminism to this day. The term "feminism" itself came from the French word "feminisme", and came up in American publications around the turn of the century. However, it was not until the late 1960s, when second wavers began to call themselves "feminists", that the word became well-known and defining for the women's movement. (Dicker, 2008)

1.2 Second wave feminism - uprising of the housewife

Gaining the right to vote was only one small part of a much bigger picture on how women were treated by society. They still faced oppression in numerous ways, most of which stemmed from the fact that their primary role as wives and mothers was interlinked with having a very low status, with even less "monetary remuneration", as Dicker put it (2008).

After winning the vote in 1920 a lot of supporters dropped out of the women's movement. Many found that their sense of purpose was gone, now that they had achieved their goal. The Roaring Twenties were characterized by a strong individualism where women went after their own personal goals in lieu of the greater good for women in general. (Dicker, 2008)

With the Great Depression in 1930 most of the women who did stay engaged in the women's movement after 1920 redirected their energy trying to get through these hard

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times. Then, World War II came and the situation for women changed dramatically, as they were called to fill all those jobs from millions of men, who had been mustered and called in for military duty. Women got jobs with higher wages, different kinds of education and qualifications for industry jobs, and subsequently gained a lot of self-confidence, because, for the greater part, they had to keep the economy going by themselves. “In all, 6 million new women entered the labor force, and others found better-paying jobs and received recognition for advancing the war effort.” (MacLean, 2009, p.5)

However, when World War II ended, many women were fired from their positions to make space for all the veterans that needed to work. Others returned to their lower-paying jobs such as teachers, nurses or secretaries or the hearth entirely, on their own decision. The ideal of the home was once again praised highly, as it represented a beacon of normality and safety after the war. “In the immediate postwar period, in a desire to reestablish the ‘normalcy’ of domesticity, most middle-class men and women reverted to a conventional division of labor, with men as breadwinners and women as homemakers.” (Dicker, 2008, p.64f) Nevertheless, there was also a feeling of achievement sparked by the success of winning the war and the foundation of the United Nations. There was a collective feeling that the world was ready for a better and more equal world.

The sense of a historic opportunity to construct a better world led a group of women to set about building the Congress of American Women (CAW) in 1946. CAW attracted a broad range of women who had remained active for women’s equality and social reform after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. An umbrella group, it brought together left-wing activists, progressive labor unionists, liberals, civil rights activists, peace workers, and European ethnic groups. (MacLean, 2009, p.6)

However, shortly thereafter the Cold War began and with it came a major shift in the

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political climate. The CAW had ties to the Communist-led Women's International Democratic Federation abroad and organized against nuclear weapons, which made them a target for American officials. As Evans indicates, the late 1940s and 1950s were an era of "political repression", which wrecked many of the more progressive movements that existed after World War I (1996). "Throughout the United states, the repression of radicalism created a forbidding climate for organizing for gender equality just as it did for the labor and civil rights movements. By the mid-1950s, calling for world peace and racial justice made a person vulnerable to suspicion, harassment, and unemployment." (MacLean, 2009, p.7) It is no wonder, that the membership of the CAW plummeted from 250,000 to a mere three thousand.

Just like a hundred years earlier, the fight for racial equality became a stepping stone for a new era of activism for gender equality in the late 1950s. The events surrounding the civil rights movement, which aimed at defeating racial segregation in the United States, made the public more open to change and address discriminations of all kind. The harsh treatments of minorities and certain demographic groups seemed incompatible with the American Dream and the Declaration of Independence, which famously states "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

What were some of the issues women were fighting for? One major issue was the fight for equal employment. In the course of this, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed and became the largest mass-membership feminist organization in the U.S. with journalist Betty Friedan as one of its first members. Friedan was also the one who drafted their Statement of Purpose and outlined a wide-ranged agenda that worked towards a fully equal partnership with men in every aspect of life (MacLean, 2009). Even though the various other emerging feminist groups had very different mindsets, the three key

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demands they agreed upon was: the right to safe and legal abortion, affordable child care and equal opportunities in education and employment (Dicker, 2008). Those were not the only inequalities women faced: they did not get the same remuneration for their work, married women could not obtain a credit card without their husband's permission, and had no credit rating of their own until the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) in 1974 (Card, 1998). Financially they were completely dependent on their husbands. Moreover, addressing domestic violence was a taboo, spousal rape was legally impossible in most states until the 90s (Rothman, 2015), and even battery was considered a "domestic issue" well into the 80s, while women had nowhere to go for help.

A lot of the criticism from feminists, especially the more radical ones, hit against the institution of marriage, which was not surprising, considering the way married women were dependent on their husbands and put into domesticity and submissiveness by the law. However, the way this criticism was carried out often included a very abrasive approach and illustrated the arrogance of feminists towards women who were not extremely supportive of the movement. For instance, women's liberationists handed out leaflets in 1969 stating some points of New York marital law including the statement that a woman was her husband's prisoner and that if he decided to move someplace else, she would have to follow or he could charge her with desertion, or that he is entitled to household services from her (MacLean, 2009). Other feminist groups, however, were against the hostility shown towards non-movement women.

According to critics, members of WITCH and The Feminists [two radical feminist groups; author's note] seemed to accuse women of ignorance and false consciousness; because they pointed fingers at allegedly less enlightened women, they actually did more to alienate women than to show sisterhood with them. (Dicker, 2008, p.88f)

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This was only one issue that further divided the women's liberation movement during the second wave. There was white and black feminism, radical and liberal feminism, heterosexual and homosexual feminist groups, pro-sex and anti-sex feminists, and one of the biggest splits was between middle-class white feminists and working-class women. The former supported the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) which would render the law blind to gender differences, because they would benefit from ending sex segregation. The latter were against it, because they feared losing legal protection specifically for working women in the industry, making women subject to draft and losing the right to get alimony. (MacLean, 2009) Nevertheless, one big step forward for all women, with the exception of the anti-sex fraction, was the introduction of the birth control pill in the 60s, which led to the so-called sexual revolution for women. As MacLean states though, this was a confusing revolution for women, because effective birth control made it harder for women to say no to sex even if they did not want it. "Thus, although women had more freedom to be sexual, men were defining what constituted 'liberation'." (MacLean, 2009, p.17) This was also the time when women became more aware of "sexism", a term coined by young women in the feminist movement, often college students, and formerly private problems and issues began to be discussed. The so-called process of "consciousness raising" (CR) gave women the opportunity to openly talk about their personal problems, such as unwanted sexual advances at the workplace and job segregation, the double standard of having a regular job and doing all the housework and child-rearing, not being taken seriously by male co-workers, sexual fears, battery and rape. At this point, women started to realize that the troubles they dealt with were not individual and strictly personal, but instead seemed to be part of a bigger problem of how society viewed women and therefore could be addressed and changed. This bigger problem is what would be considered as the patriarchy. Around that time the motto for the women's liberation movement became "The private is political".

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(Dicker, 2008; MacLean, 2009; Snyder, 2008)

The stereotype of the lesbian, man-hating and bra-burning feminist was simply a jumbling together of more extreme exceptions. Lesbians were actually excluded from women's liberation groups for a long time up until the 60s and 70s, and they had to hide their sexuality if they wanted to partake in the movement. Especially the more liberal (as opposed to radical) NOW worried that the "women's movement would be ignored because of its association with homosexuality", which is why Betty Friedan labeled lesbianism a "lavender menace" in 1969 (Dicker, 2008). Lesbians did form their own groups and even went as far as to consider lesbianism a sort of political act. Dicker cites Ginny Berson, who wrote in 1972 that "lesbianism is not a matter of sexual preference, but rather one of political choice which every woman must make if she is to become woman-identified and thereby end male supremacy." (ibid.) The internal fights, that lastly almost broke second wave feminism altogether, were the infamous sex wars. Deep disagreements about prostitution, seeking sexual pleasure, lesbianism and pornography between anti-sex and pro-sex feminists (Waters, 2007), painted a picture in the public eye of feminism being anti-man and extremely prude, which stuck.

Despite all the disagreements, splits and attacks from within and without the women's liberation movement, the second wave of feminism brought attention to multiple issues and achieved numerous successes in the fight for gender equality. From the emergence of women's safe houses, rape crisis hotlines, reforms in legislature, the option of legal abortion, child-care centers, better education, and employment opportunities, to raising the awareness that women are more than just mothers, housewives, or bodies and that they shall be treated as equal citizens, the feminists laid the focus on the fact that women's rights are human rights.

1.3 Third wave feminism - taking back femininity

Third wave feminism evolved in response to the radicalism and rigidity of second wave feminists and to the declaration of the death of feminism. In the late 1990s, the *Time Magazine* asked on its cover “Is feminism dead?” It was presumed by a big part of the media that young women did not support feminism, because they felt it is not needed anymore (Aronson, 2003). This alleged postfeminist era was called upon after the strong backlashes feminists had to deal with from the mass media and the public in the 80s. However, feminism never actually died, hence the third wave. Rebecca Walker, one of the earliest third-wavers explained it as a more open and inclusive movement than feminism had been before. Before, being a feminist meant having to conform to a certain identity and a certain way to live which did not allow for much complexity or room for error; it meant having to choose one side or the other: male or female, black against white, oppressor against oppressed or good against bad (Snyder, 2008). Snyder cites Walker saying: “This way of ordering the world is especially difficult for a generation that has grown up transgender, bisexual, interracial, and knowing and loving people who are racist, sexist, and otherwise afflicted.” (Walker¹, 2006, p.22) Third-wavers have a way of portraying second-wavers as “antimale, antisex, anti-femininity, and antifun” (Snyder, 2008, p.179), while also being extremely judgmental towards women who did not agree with them wholeheartedly. Nevertheless, one should not forget, that this is also a very close-minded picture of second wave feminists, because in a movement this big, there were so many varieties and different views on topics, only some of which certainly were more extremist. That means one cannot measure everything with the same yardstick. With a minimum of

¹ Walker, Rebecca (2006): Being Real: An Introduction from To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism. In: Heywood, Leslie: (2006): The Women’s Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third-Wave Feminism, vol. 2, Primary Documents. Westport, CT: Greenwood. p.19–23.

four schools of thought, including liberal, socialist, radical and cultural, second wave feminism can hardly be defined as having one party line (Snyder, 2008). Third wave feminists claim to be more racially open and approving of various identities that seemed incompatible with feminism before, such as being religiously devout or into beauty culture or a big sports fan, says Snyder (2008). The third wave rejects an ideal version of society or the individual and accepts that “there is no one right way to be: no role, no model” (Reed, 2003, p.124) Although they claim they concentrate on more than just women’s issues, their actual agenda does not really differ that much from the second wave.

Snyder believes third wave feminism to be a very chaotic movement, which also has CR-work as its center piece. Most texts, in books, magazines, or nowadays especially online, are personal experiences and accounts on various matters (2008). Therefore, the third wave has been declared as a depoliticized movement that emphasizes the personal lives of women too much (Waters, 2007) and hence, constitutes “consumerism not politics” (Woodhull, 2007, p.159). The new wave claims to include all races, which the second wave was criticized of not doing because they ignored the fact that not all women share the same kind of oppressions and some even ignored the existence of black women altogether (Zack, 2005). Third wavers also include the gender spectrum of the LGBT community, thus getting rid of the category “women” itself. According to Snyder, some feminists are wondering how feminism can continue without this category, but third wavers take an anarchistic approach to politics therefore eliminating the need for a social movement that concentrates on collective action. They rather call for direct political action or see individual acts as political ones. (Snyder, 2008)

While a third-wave approach to feminism may not be able to generate a unified vision or inspire a mass movement, it does continue the tradition of feminism as critique, as a critical lens that should be turned on all existing discourses,

institutions, and cultural practices. (Snyder, 2008, p.188)

In general though, this new wave is very chaotic and theoretically unsound as of yet. Whenever third wave feminists aim for a more theoretical and politically structured position, they focus on the picture of how women are portrayed in the mass media (Garrison, 2007). Yet on the other hand, they find themselves on the pro-sex side, which split the women's movement in the 60s and 70s, and argue *for* sexuality, sexual freedoms, beauty culture and even pornography, all in the name of feminist choice (Waters, 2007).

However, this neither eliminates nor finds a solution for the core questions that have been raised by feminists in the 70s about pleasure and danger when it comes to sexuality for women. As Snyder puts it: "Sexism may in fact be sexy to many, but what does that mean for the feminist dream of gender equality?" (2008, p.190) Chivalry, male dominance in the bedroom and the thrill of objectification surely can be desired by women in their intimate relationships (Snyder, 2008). Sexuality is present in both men and women and a very important part of human life. But does it affect and influence equality in the public in a negative way? After all the personal is political, or is it not? Melanie Waters explains that while this pro-sex, pro-choice and nonjudgmental attitude makes feminism more approachable and popular for younger women, it still undermines the politicized discussion of feminist topics and creates a hostile environment for feminist debate and criticism, while reinforcing patriarchal standards (Waters, 2007). These views of third wave feminism seem to have a lot in common with declared postfeminism and even antifeminism, which will be further elucidated in the next chapter.

In any case, third wave feminism still tries to achieve goals of freedom, justice and equality for all people, with a strong focus on gender-related issues, but using a very different set of tactics to achieve these goals (Snyder, 2008). Yet, one more characteristic of this wave, which can be strongly criticized, is its stark focus on American issues, despite

all its claims of being universal and inclusive. “[...] third-wave feminism focuses almost exclusively on American feminism, often prioritizing issues that at best do not resonate internationally and at worst undermine the possibility of transnational coalitions.” (Snyder, 2008, p.192) It still might be a possibility to create change for the insolvable problems feminism faced in the 80s and 90s or at least bring about a more diverse view of feminism in America, even if it might never be a social movement at all, due to its efforts to be inclusive in terms of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability (Anderson, 2015; Snyder, 2008).

2 Antifeminism - A broader definition

Unsurprisingly, antifeminism is as old as feminism itself, if not older. Feminists would not have had to fight for their rights if nobody had opposed them. Therefore, one could assume that at the very beginning of the women’s movement most of society was antifeminist or non-feminist by default. That does not mean society hated women (and by society the author does not only refer to men), but it did view women as lesser or less capable than men or in the very least responsible for a different set of duties, namely the home. Back in the day, this was plainly the way it was. Initially, there was a lot of resistance from women themselves, who thought it would not be a good idea to grant women the right to vote.

Nowadays, antifeminism is a completely different story. It is not as easily defined as one might think. After extensive research three major manifestations, that could be considered forms of antifeminism, were found: The least extreme would be postfeminism, which is based on the assumption that feminism is nowadays obsolete and therefore dead, because it has already achieved its goals for women in modern Western society; then there is “normal” antifeminism which strongly speaks out against feminism, because it assumes feminism has gone too far and is not concerned anymore with equality but rather with female superiority; and the most rigorous would be extremely conservative and radical

antifeminism that is associated with Men's Rights Activism, which actually tries to convince people of a reversal of sexual discrimination towards men and boys.

2.1 Postfeminism

Feminism has been declared dead plenty of times in the past decades, not only by antifeminists but by the mass media itself. Famously portrayed by a 1998 cover of *Time Magazine* with the headline "Is feminism dead" and the pictures of Susan B. Anthony, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem and Ally McBeal on the cover. The cover story basically stated that young feminists are only concerned with themselves and their bodies and have no interest in collective action for greater women's issues, but instead drown themselves in individualism and egomania (Bellafante, 1998). The same problem is being raised today by Kristin J. Anderson, who addresses similar concerns in her book *Modern Misogyny. Anti-feminism in a Post-feminist Era*. The three major points Anderson makes are:

1. Postfeminism uses the same rhetoric like feminism by making profound use of the words "choice" and "empowerment", but attaching a quite different meaning to it.
2. Postfeminism moves away from collective action, protest and resistance towards individualism and consumerism, consequently killing off the lifeblood of civil rights movements.
3. The hyper-sexualization of girls and women is key to postfeminism, because now women can "choose" to be sexual objects. (Anderson, 2015)

Postfeminism does not seem to be antifeminist at all, since it does not deny or try to take away from feminism's successes. Quite the contrary, it celebrates the movement's success in all major issues, eliminating any social, political or legal inequities for women and therefore rendering it obsolete. Women are now powerful competitors to men and have the right to choose how they want to live their life. It connects very closely with the typical picture of the American Dream, which is finally and fully available to the female citizen.

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This means that one is completely responsible for one's own luck and success, but it also means one is completely accountable for one's own failures. Therefore, any kind of sexism or sexual discrimination experienced by women is de facto their own fault. (Anderson, 2015)

As mentioned earlier, postfeminism is a term that has been thrown around since the late 80s, and there have been plenty of studies on how or if young women identify with feminism or not in the 90s. However, I want to focus on what the situation is like in the twenty-first century. A HuffPost/YouGov² poll from spring 2013 showed that only 20% of Americans identify as feminists, while the vast majority would fit the basic definition of the term, since they support the thought of equality for both sexes. The reason for this discrepancy might be because the term “feminism” is viewed as a negative one by many: thirty-seven percent considered it to be negative, while only 26% regard it as positive, the rest thought it was a neutral term. (Swanson, 2013)

One of the most recent nationwide surveys in the U.S. among men and women 18 years and older, conducted by PerryUndem Research/Communication, found out that only 18% consider themselves to be feminists. Fifty-two percent clearly stated no, while 26% said they were not sure and the remaining 4% refused to answer this question. However, once again the overwhelming majority, more than 78%, believed in the social, political, legal and economic equality of the sexes or equality for women respectively (PerryUndem, 2015). This study was performed in May 2015 on behalf of the general news site VOX³. Interestingly enough, 76% of the interviewees found that there is still work to be done until women are equal to men in work, life and politics. This would directly contradict the

² <https://today.yougov.com/about/about/>

³ <http://www.vox.com>

assumption that postfeminism makes, about feminism being obsolete due to all the successes it scored.

Lewis has a different sort of definition for postfeminism. While she agrees that it is difficult to actually define it, due to the lack of agreement surrounding the term, she herself does not see it as a theoretical concept that is *against* feminism, like Anderson does. Acknowledging the strong connection between third wave feminism and postfeminism, she considers it necessary to understand the former in order to grasp the meaning of the latter. As mentioned before, third wave feminism reclaims the “girl culture” and femininity formerly denied by second-wavers, while also mainly focusing on identity politics and lots of autobiographical writings (Lewis, 2014). This focus on choice, empowerment and individualism (also found in postfeminism) was the main point of criticism, as it made it especially hard to construct or analyze the third wave from an academic point of view (Snyder, 2008). Like third wave feminism, postfeminism rejects the category of women and urges for a different view on factors, that define the treatment of women in social contexts other than their gender, such as race, ethnicity, class, age, and sexual orientation. Lewis refers to Projansky’s⁴ (2001) and Dean’s⁵ (2010a, 2010b) interpretation which paints postfeminism as

[...] a phenomenon which is discursively produced through the intersections of a group of hegemonic discourses around gender, feminism and femininity. In this sense postfeminism is recognized as a cultural discourse that shapes our thinking, attitudes and behaviour towards feminism and women’s changing

⁴ Projansky, S. (2001). *Watching rape: Film and television in postfeminist culture*. New York, NY: New York. University Press.

⁵ Dean, J. (2010a). *Rethinking contemporary feminist politics*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. Dean, J. (2010b). Feminism in the papers: Contested feminisms in the British quality press. *Feminist Media Studies*, 10, 391–407.

position in contemporary society [...] (Lewis, 2014, p.1850)

This view of postfeminism shows it to be a cultural response to feminism with the desire to revise and renew rather than displace it.

2.2 Antifeminism

The so-called second wave of the feminist movement, which was roughly from the 1960s to the 1980s, made huge steps forward in helping women gain a better status in society by fighting for equal education possibilities, equal pay, the right of decision over one's own body (such as abortion rights), by introducing women's studies programs, and more. However, as Aronson (2003) noted, it also had to fight with serious mass-media antifeminist backlash, which was "evident in a decline in grassroots mobilization and negative public discourse by antifeminist organizations and media figures (Faludi, 1991⁶; Marx Ferree⁷ & Hess, 1995; Schneider, 1988⁸, cited by Aronson, 2003)." One of the most prominent terms that shaped the stereotype of feminism and stuck to it until today, came from Rush Limbaugh, who referred to feminists as "feminazis" in his book *The way things ought to be* from 1993. Another prototype of antifeminism is Pat Robertson, a television evangelist, who was a contender as a Republican presidential candidate in the late 80s. In 1992, he wrote an open letter in opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, attacking feminism as "a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." (New York Times, 1992)

⁶ Faludi, Susan. 1991. Backlash: The undeclared war against American women. New York: Crown.

⁷ Marx Ferree, Myra, and Beth B. Hess. 1995. Controversy and coalition: The new feminist movement across four decades of change. 3d ed. New York: Routledge.

⁸ Schneider, Beth. 1988. Political generations and the contemporary women's movement. *Sociological Inquiry* 58:4-21.

While this is nowadays clearly not the mainstream thought on the American women's movement, these statements did help to construct a negative image of feminists which to some degree prevails today. As we will see through the analysis, today's feminism in the United States has the reputation of being whiney, focused on problems that have minimal actual negative impact on women's lives and ignorant towards the real issues that women and girls face in other places, such as Africa and the Middle East. Current issues and campaigns include the "Ban Bossy" campaign⁹, which tries to eliminate the word "bossy" from the English language, due to its apparently harmful effect on young girls or *Slut Walks*, which are protests trying to bring attention to rape and sexual assault in connection with *victim-blaming* and *sex-shaming*. Typical instances of victim-blaming and sex-shaming would be the assumption, that a woman who had been raped is responsible herself because of revealing clothes or flirtatious behavior and was therefore "asking for it". Members of Slut Walks want to appropriate the word "slut" (and other similar terms) "to use it in a subversive, self-defining, positive, empowering and respectful way." (SlutwalkToronto.com) The way these protests are carried out, sure obtain attention but get ambivalent responses even from feminists themselves, since they are carried out in a very revealing manner as can be shown in fig.1. The following picture is an example of one such reaction of the Women Against Feminism, towards aforementioned Slut Walks.

⁹ www.banbossy.com

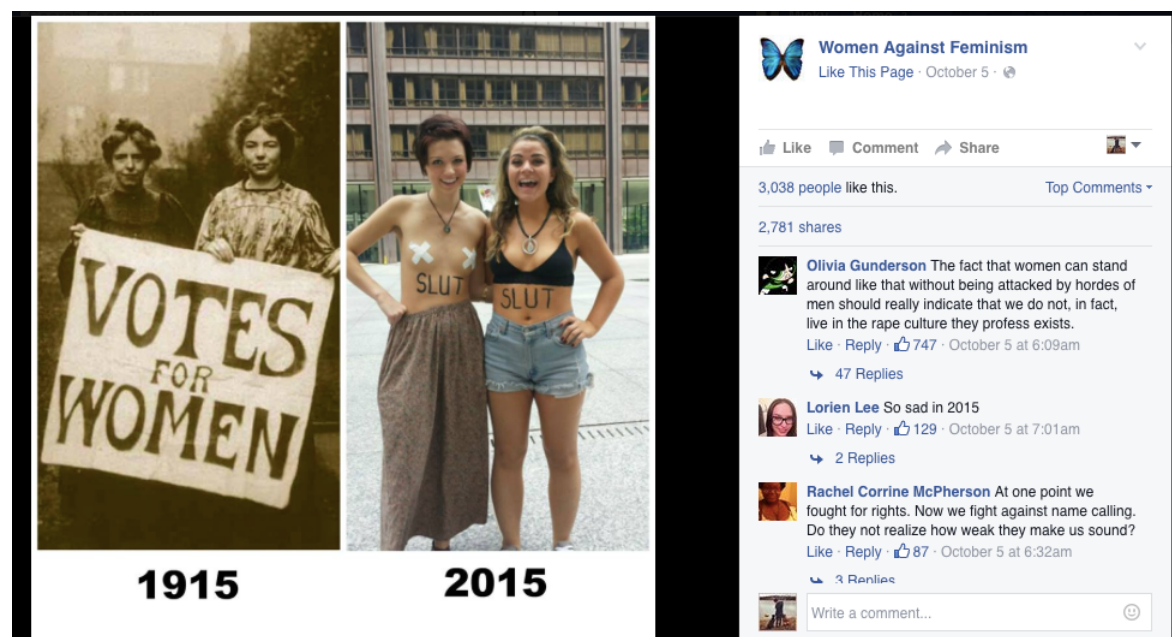


figure 1: screenshot of one WAF post with over 3,000 Likes

Another topic that is being criticized by antifeminists is the assumption that Americans live in a so-called *rape culture*. What is meant by rape culture? The term has been invented by feminists in the 1970s and is nowadays one of the main catchphrases of modern feminism. It describes the way in which society is assumingly blaming victims for being raped and seeing male sexual violence against women as something normal. This expresses itself through the media, jokes, jargon, advertising, music and the like (Women Against Violence Against Women, 2015). Apparently the interplay between all these outlets communicates the message that women ought to be abused, used and exploited, making it a “cultural norm” (Kitchens, 2014), which Kitchens finds to be ridiculous.

Tolerance for rape? Rape is a horrific crime, and rapists are despised. We have strict laws that Americans want to see enforced. Though rape is certainly a serious problem, there’s no evidence that it’s considered a cultural norm. Twenty-first century America does not have a rape culture; what we have is an out-of-control lobby leading the public and our educational and political leaders down the wrong path. Rape-culture theory is doing little to help victims, but its power to poison the minds of young

women and lead to hostile environments for innocent males is immense. (Kitchens, 2014, March 20)

The fight against rape culture focuses especially on college campuses, where a lot of financial capital flows to projects, which are trying to raise awareness of sexual assault. These efforts do not focus on actual high-risk demographic groups for sexual assault and rape, such as less educated women and girls from poorer working class families (Hoff Summers, 2015) but instead contribute to mistrust, hysteria and fear among peers. Another main feminist issue is the much debated wage gap, which states that women earn roughly 78 cents for every dollar a man earns and refers to gender as the main reason. One can find as many studies claiming there is such a gender based wage gap, as one can find refuting research, still the major political and public consensus is pointing towards an existence of the wage gap, though this will not be discussed in detail in this thesis.

The negative views that persist in today's society about modern feminism, are strengthened by the voices of various media outlets and individuals. One might think that only men are antifeminists, but that is far from true. There are quite a few female antifeminists whose writings are further shaping the unfavorable picture of modern feminism. One of the more high-profiled antifeminists is Christina Hoff Summers. She is a former philosophy professor who taught ethics at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts and is now a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a very conservative right-wing non-profit institution, which conducts research and engages itself in a wide range of political, social and economic issues. Hoff Summers wrote famous books such as *Who Stole Feminism* in the 90s or *The War Against Boys* in 2001, where she critiques modern feminism. She does not view herself as an antifeminist at all, but rather she considers herself an equity feminist or how she likes to refer to it now "freedom feminist". The label "antifeminist" was more likely forced upon her by the feminist

community of which she used to be a well-known member. Christina Hoff Summers is indisputably a very conservative, edgy and provocative personality but her views do not seem to resonate antifeminism:

In the world's advanced democracy, it's just hard to say which sex is doing better because it's a complicated mix of burdens and benefits. So a modern gender equity movement that would seek to help both sexes with their distinctive problems, that could be so successful. (Hoff Summers, 2014, October 6)

There are quite a few of these “feminist anti-feminists”. American feminist blogger and journalist, Amanda Marcotte, gave a little historic overview of the, what she considers to be, feminist antifeminists, starting with the second wave in the 60s and 70s. The major leader back then was Phyllis Schlafly, an American conservative activist, author and speaker, who played a major role in defeating the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The basic argument of antifeminists at that time was, that women and men are created different by God for a reason and therefore should adhere to the traditional roles that they were made for. Apart from overturning the full ratification of the ERA, their major victories included the foundation of the anti-abortion movement and stopping federally subsidized day-care (Marcotte, 2010).

The group of antifeminists from the 80s and 90s, to which Christina Hoff Summers, Kathleen Parker (*Save The Males*) and Camille Paglia (*Sexual Personae*) allegedly belong, took the view that feminism had already accomplished its goals and anything beyond that were just women trying to gain superiority over men, because of dislike or even hatred towards men. They fought against stronger sexual harassment laws especially and were extremely put off by the construction of words like “date rape” or “rape culture”. To this day, Hoff Summers tries to debunk certain “feminist myths” such as the statistic that nowadays one in five college girls is being sexually assaulted. “One in 40 [college women

who are sexually assaulted; author's note] is still bad, but apparently not bad enough for the activists!" (Hoff Summers, 2014) New research which reinforced that one-in-five statistic has been criticized and called upon to be seriously flawed (2015) also by Stuart S. Taylor in a recent article for the *Washington Post*. According to Hoff Summers, the reason why seemingly few people know about this and the majority of the media and politicians share these apparently false statistics is, that we live in a world of gender propaganda. Christopher Krebs and Christine Lindquist, two Senior social researchers who conducted the Campus Sexual Assault study upon which the infamous one-in-five statistic stems from, also state that it is inappropriate to use the number the way it is being used today (2014). It is a number only derived from two universities and includes rape, as well as other forms of sexual assault such as forced kissing, groping of body parts or frotteurism – the act of rubbing against someone in a sexual way even when fully dressed. Krebs and Lindquist concede that their survey data has limitations, however, they also mention that they believe their findings have value since they are not inconsistent with other similar surveys, and that law enforcement and campus crime data tend to “dramatically underestimate the prevalence of sexual assault” because most victims do not report the incidents (2014).

Camille Paglia, for instance, is a strong defender of the biological differences between men and women which, according to feminists, do not exist. She also greatly attacked feminists such as Gloria Steinem for blaming women's problems on the patriarchy: “These white middle-class women love this current brand of ideology because it allows them to explain their own weaknesses to the world.” (Paglia, 1992) Paglia was and still is very much against what she calls an “overprotection” of women and telling women they are fragile and oppressed victims. This resonates with what a lot of women today think. Women do not want to be told they are victims of the patriarchy and that they are basically dependent on feminism to help them. Extremely questionable and to some

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extent fairly ridiculous actions, such as an enormously wide range of *trigger warnings*, are not exactly helping to fight this bad image of feminism. One example of such a trigger warning includes students at Harvard University, who asked their professors to stop teaching rape law, or use the word “violate”, as it could trigger traumas or anxiety in students who have experienced sexual assault before (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015).

Nowadays, the main issues that feminist antifeminists, such as former Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin, concentrate on, are the anti-abortion lobby and regulations regarding colleges and universities. The anti-abortion lobby helped push abstinence-only sexual education in American schools and continues to make it harder for women to terminate their pregnancies, oftentimes even in cases of rape or when the woman’s health is endangered. (Marcotte, 2010) These efforts might be seen as strong violations of women’s rights and ignorance towards a healthy education about sexuality for boys and girls.

However, when it comes to college campuses and universities it might seem that it is not women who are put at a disadvantage. Janice Fiamengo, English Professor at the University of Ottawa, considers herself an antifeminist. There are three main issues, that she is concerned with when it comes to modern day feminism and its manifestation on university campuses. One is the “irrationality” that has taken over academic feminism. “Claiming victimhood now trumps fact, argument and debate.” (Fiamengo, 2015, August 8) According to Fiamengo, feminists claim that victims should never be made to feel unsafe, physically but also emotionally and psychologically, ruling out any possibility to confront them with their own actions or disparate views that might “trigger” past traumas (2015).

In claiming the status of victim and by assigning all blame to others, a person can achieve moral superiority while simultaneously disowning any responsibility for one's behavior and its outcome. The victims ‘merely’ seek justice and fairness. If they

become violent, it is only as a last resort, in self-defense. The victim stance is a powerful one. The victim is always morally right, neither responsible nor accountable, and forever entitled to sympathy. (Zur, 1995, n.p.)

The problem with radical feminists is, that they do not want to engage in debate with people who challenge their views. Professor Fiamengo herself experienced this: when she tried to give a speech at the University of Ottawa in March 2015 about the presumed rape culture, a group of students disrupted the event and ultimately kept her from speaking by blowing horns and otherwise making a lot of noise. There have been more incidents like this one, where feminists ultimately protested with hooded faces¹⁰ and inhibited people from exercising their right to free speech by, for instance, illegally pulling fire alarms¹¹, which Fiamengo understandably considers to be a big problem for academia.

2.3 Men's Rights Activism

Men's Rights Activism (MRA) is the most extreme form of antifeminism which aspires to point out how men are the victims of reversed sexual discrimination. I will not go into too much detail about MRA, because the social movement of Women Against Feminism clearly states that they are not a MRA page. For the sake of completeness, I will give a short overview of the disputes that men's right activists raise complaints about, seeing as a lot of formerly mentioned antifeminists also use the same arguments to denounce feminism.

One of the main catchphrases in that context is the so-called *boy crisis*. Apparently, the media as well as schools are now anti-male and teach young boys that they belong to the "bad sex" and that boys' masculinity is "politically incorrect", as Christina Hoff Summers (2000, p.25) puts it. These claims of the boy crisis also warn that today boys are

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KpdL8UuntA>

¹¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO_X4DkwA_Q

falling behind in school performance, while girls are getting better and better. Antifeminists attribute this to feminist actions which lead to a stronger focus on girls' performance and encouragement, consequently leaving boys behind. The American Psychological Association cites a meta-analysis from Daniel and Susan Voyer of the University of New Brunswick, based on research from 1914 to 2011 and spanning over 30 different countries, which found this to be untrue. The fact is that girls have always been slightly better in school than boys with no great changes in that respect in the past decades: "[...] results showed that the magnitude of the female advantage was not affected by year of publication, thereby contradicting claims of a recent 'boy crisis' in school achievement." (D. Voyer & S. Voyer, 2014, p. 1174)

Other concerns raised are the fact that men are also victims of domestic violence, but that this is being completely ignored by feminists and the media. There are almost no safe houses or shelters for mistreated men, and when asking for help they possibly face being ridiculed by society if the perpetrator was a woman. Further claims state that it has gotten much easier, especially for college women, to falsely accuse their male peers of rape or sexual assault, which can destroy the lives of young men (Wells, 2015; Pearson, 2015).

Moreover, women who commit exactly the same crime as men, get off with considerably lower punishments than men do. In fact, if men and women are arrested for the same crime and have a similar criminal history, women are much likelier to avoid charges and convictions entirely and twice as likely to avoid incarceration if found guilty (Starr, 2012).

Notwithstanding the actual validity or non-validity of these arguments, MRA groups are oftentimes not only antifeminist but also extremely misogynistic towards women that do not represent their ideal of a woman or any woman for that matter. And while it is true that every gender has specific issues that are unique to them, considering white males to be

discriminated against because of their gender seems a little far fetched. To say it with the words of author and socialist Dr. Michael Kimmel, one of the world's leading experts on men and masculinities from the University of Stony Brook, who actively tries to engage men and boys in the quest for gender equality, from a recent speech at a TED talk:

[...] without confronting men's sense of entitlement, I don't think we'll ever understand why so many men resist gender equality. [...] so let me be very clear: White men in Europe and the United States are the beneficiaries of the single greatest affirmative action program in the history of the world. It's called the history of the world. (Kimmel, May 2015)

However, this should *never* be a reason not to talk about men's issues as well and to try and engage in constructive and reasoned debate about the unique problems individuals face regardless of their gender.

3 Political Communication Online

In this chapter, I will make a point of why I consider political communication online as an important subject to study and analyze. In addition, an explanation of where in the framework of political communication and online activism the activities on the Facebook page Women Against Feminism can be placed, will be given.

In a time of growing political apathy, resentment and distrust for politics among Western countries, any form of political communication among citizens should be welcomed and recognized. Today, the main marketplace for sharing, criticizing and discovering ideas is the Internet. As a channeler-of-channels, the Internet offers a number of characteristics that invite the possibility for increased political participation generally, and political conversation specifically. The unique characteristics of the Internet enable citizens to produce, comment on, edit, remove, and recommend portions of a global dialogue. This has set it apart as a medium with the potential to transform the democratic

landscape at large and expand the public sphere. (Stromer-Galley & Wichowski, 2013) It is particularly interesting to study the Internet as a medium for communication and social interaction (Jensen, 2013) and to view it not only as a technical computer network, but also as a social construction and a social good, like Salter (2013) does. The political character of the Internet is seen nowhere so clearly as in the vexed policy questions it raises. There is nothing so quintessentially political as the raging conflict between competing interests, rights, concerns and opinions to which the Internet gives direct expression.

From politicians, various political bloggers and the media, to political activist groups, social movements and online communities; when it comes to political communication online, there is a vast and almost never-ending amount of data. A lot of civic discussion and communicative interaction takes place online, which most theories of democracy have generally considered as vital (Dahlgren, 2004). There has been and continues to be a lot of research on how the Internet may transform or shape our democracies. The main focus has been on the public sphere theory and deliberative democracy theory according to Habermas. However, the Habermasian ideal of the public sphere and its construction of a deliberative democracy (where everyone has access, everyone is being equally heard and through rational argumentation and discussion the best argument wins) is, frankly spoken, unattainable. Along with the public sphere theory comes a very narrow definition of politics which tends to exclude certain types of online communities with respect to political relevant communication (Shaw, 2012). In other words, the high standards of deliberative democracy effectively render online politics dubious and inhibit them from being taken seriously, because Habermas' theory of publics "lacks acceptance of the inevitability of power relations and inequality in social life." (Shaw, 2012, p. 43)

3.1 Online Political Participation

There has been plenty of research on social movements and also on social movements that

incorporate ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) to support their work and action. However, there is only a relatively small amount of research to be specifically found on social movements or communities that almost solely rely on social media platforms to exist and share their political opinions.

Since the community that has been analyzed is antifeminist, it is even more interesting to consider that feminist theories of the public sphere argue, that the term of the political public should not be narrowed down to governments, parliaments and political parties. On the contrary, the slogan “The private is political” from second wave feminism makes the fact apparent that there is a need to open up the term of the political sphere. As Klaus and Drüeke state: “[...] Politikgestaltung findet nicht exklusiv in den Parteien, Parlamenten und Regierungen statt, wie es liberale Öffentlichkeitstheorien postulieren und die traditionelle Politikberichterstattung der Massenmedien suggeriert, sondern auch in vielen anderen Foren und Formen.” (2012, p.59) They specifically call upon online forums, blogs and the spectrum of social media with their blend of rational argumentation and emotional commentatorship, in the form of digital storytelling, to be an important part in political participation (Klaus & Drüeke, 2012). As Stromer-Galley states, people who participate in online political discussion derive not only pleasure but also benefits from their communication online. “It would be a mistake to minimize the experiences of those who use these forums, simply because they fail to engage in the kind of discussions theorists hold as an unattainable ideal.” (2013, p.182)

The interest in researching what kind of possibilities the Internet and with it social media hold, when it comes to political engagement and participation, becomes apparent when one looks at the astoundingly dropping rates of voter participation and consumption of political news in traditional media. Among citizens in Western society, the arena of official politics has witnessed a decline in support and participation. Voter turnouts are ever

decreasing and party loyalty is in decline, especially among the young. One can see signs of contempt for the political class, with a climate of cynicism emerging in some places. (Dahlgren, 2004)

Interest rates on politics are especially low for women. But is it really that women are not interested in politics or is it just that they use different forms of communication to voice their opinions and interests and to take part in social movements? Dahlgren also states, that if one looks more closely, one can see that there is a new kind of politics emerging, which he calls “life-style politics”, “new politics” or even “sub-politics”. Some studies might suggest this holds true especially for women, since their interest in political knowledge might be more concerned with politics that affect their daily lives (Pollak, 2013). What Dahlgren means is that there is a variety of different ways that people engage in political conversation and action on their own time and in their own way. This is facilitated by the Internet and social networking sites:

There are many kinds of social movements, special interest organizations, activist groups, single-issue coalitions, and civic networks. These all suggest that if we look beyond the formal political arena, we can see clear signs that many people have decidedly *not* [emphasis by author] retreated from the arena of common concerns and abandoned political engagement. Rather, they have refocused their political attention in other arenas, developed other political targets, and developed other modes of political engagement. (Dahlgren, 2004, p.xii)

So-called cyberactivism, which could be considered a terminological umbrella for all kinds of alternatives of political participation online, makes it easier for people to take action in matters of their particular political interests, without having to have extreme views or spend intense amounts of personal time and money in participation. Nowadays, citizens who might not even consider themselves activists, are taking part in online mobilization and

recently social networking sites are having an ever greater impact on political participation (Hara & Huang, 2011). One of these impacts definitely includes how certain politicians, policies or even ideologies (like in this case) are portrayed and viewed. Making these images known to an increasingly greater audience is one task online social movements are performing, which could possibly have an effect on the public opinion on these topics. The Facebook page Women Against Feminism is trying to show the public and the media, that feminism does *not* speak for all women. With an ever-growing number of supporters, they are making themselves known and are starting to be mentioned in online articles. What started off as a simple Facebook page, has already started a debate about a decades-old prevalent movement. As we have experienced before, one small opinion loudly spoken, can go a very long way and have an impact on thousands of people, especially when it goes viral.

3.2 Discursive activism online

The next question that poses itself is how and when can online criticism and discourse be considered political activism? There have been plenty of studies discussing, how the Internet may help to create a more open and more democratic space for political discussion, following the public sphere theory and the Habermasian notion of deliberative democracy. But as mentioned before, the normative structures that are inherent to these theories, greatly limit the possibilities of what can be considered political activism. This is why WAF will not be analyzed in its capacity to live up to these ideals of the public sphere. Instead, on the supposition that their activities are political ones, the objective of this study is to find out what their portrayal of feminism is.

WAF is participating in so-called discursive activism online. Discursive activism can be defined as speech or text, that challenge the opposing mainstream discourse about certain topics and show the flawed assumptions and power relations within these discourses

(Shaw, 2012). These activist discourses are supposed to break social silences and have been used by feminism for a long time (ibid.), while now they are also being used against it. Shaw suggests that for understanding political discourses online it would be helpful to change the approach from the public sphere and deliberative democracy to one of *agonistic democracy*, meaning that conflict, dissent and disagreement are essential parts of politics (2012). In agreement with Shaw, online political communication of various kinds should be taken seriously and therefore should be analyzed to find out the intentions and capabilities of various social movements and social networks, that seek to alter the discourse about specific topics, in this case, feminism.

3.3 Online Social Movements

On the following few pages, I will define the community of Women Against Feminism as an online social movement and explain why that is the case, even though some scholars would suggest otherwise.

New Social Movements (NSMs), for instance, are not “new” in the common sense of the word. Salter mentions that Habermas¹² believed them to protect the “grammar ways of life” and to protect “civil society from encroachments by the system” and to “patrol the borders between the system and the lifeworld” (Salter, 2003, p.126). They detect societal problems and troubles and try to put them on the public agenda (Salter, 2003) without being under the typical restrictions of the system, the mass media and politicians. In this day and age, the Internet proves to be the perfect medium to do that. Theoretically, one can reach a large audience without having to worry about certain gatekeepers or censoring and, if necessary, do so anonymously. Traditional news and information services are simply not

¹² Habermas, J. (1987): *The Theory of Communicative Action: The Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Habermas, J. (1989b): *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Habermas, J. (1996): *Between Facts and Norms*. London: Polity Press.

suited to such needs, being, as they are, reactive rather than active. Furthermore, NSMs may be regarded as taking the “moral point of view”; that is, they are not working for the interests of their members, but for those of humanity or nature, as a whole. (Salter, 2003, p.126)

However, does that really hold true? Are social movements only to be classified as such if they are supposedly supporting a moral cause? Habermas seems to think so, but it depends more on how one defines social movements. One such definition is as follows: “A social movement is constituted by large numbers of individuals, networks, and groups that express grievances and make claims on power holders in a sustained form of contentious and unconventional politics.” (Moghadam, 2013, p.IX) According to Moghadam’s definition, Women Against Feminism can be considered an online social movement, since they have over 35,000 followers and are continuously growing. They are making themselves and their grievances about feminism known in the form of pictures they send in, stating why they do not need feminism and discussing news and articles.

How one defines a social movement is also dependent on how civil society is defined and how they relate to each other. In strictly normative terms [global] civil society is “the site of democratic, nonviolent, and emancipatory associational interaction.” (Moghadam, 2013, p.58) Despite that, some of the biggest social movements, for example, include certain religious communities who are not democratic and progressive or a sphere of emancipation at all, but might well be the opposite. Certainly, the segmentary, polycentric, and reticulate nature of social movements guarantees the presence of different tendencies within a movement, including radical, militant, or even terrorist wings. Thus making it possible to distinguish between progressive and reactionary social movements and civil society (or nonstate) actors. (Moghadam, 2013, p.58)

Nonetheless, in both cases social movements indeed *do* serve their members or

evolve to support a common cause that is proper for their followers. It would be extremely narrow-minded to define social movements solely on their volition and ability to fight for nature or humanity as a whole, for this would exclude all kinds of smaller movements that might not change the world on a big scale, but that try to make a difference for their own social world. Additionally, it would not be possible to find a common definition on how to save humanity, since there are many views and opinions on what our world needs. Hara and Huang selected definitions that, in their opinion, are relevant to online social movements, which demonstrate that: “the main goal of social movements is to seek social change and alter the relations of power” (Hara & Huang, 2011, p. 491). They also have a different view than Habermas on new social movements: “New social movements differ from traditional ones because they are less concerned with economic issues and emphasize instead group or collective identity, values, and lifestyles.” (Hara & Huang, 2011, p.491)

However, Stewart, Smith, and Denton define social movements as at least minimally organized, meaning there has got to be a certain spokesperson or leader, or several leaders for that matter, and followers. Anything other than that they consider a fad, trend, unorganized protest or rant (2012). Following this definition, the Women Against Feminism do not count as a social movement, but rather as an online community or maybe even political group. The initiator of the Tumblr and Facebook group states that this group has no leader in itself and she does not aim to speak for all followers, instead, she says, every woman has her own voice and this platform shall give them the opportunity to be heard.

Nevertheless, Van de Donk, Loader, Nixon, and Rucht do not agree with that definition of social movements. On the contrary, they state time and again that social movements tend to be

[...] fuzzy and fluid phenomena often without clear boundaries. Although they

may include formal organizations as components, on the whole they are not an organization. A social movement typically lacks membership forms, statutes, chairpersons, and the like. It may expand or shrink considerably over relatively short periods of time, and exhibit phases of visibility and latency. (2004, p.3)

Moreover, the question on how to measure and classify various social movements online is not easily answered. For instance, when can a group that solely exists online and operates under an activist umbrella, or at least the impression of one, be declared as an activist group? Ayers ascertains that an online social movement group must take offline action if it wishes to bring about political change that goes further than what you see on computer screens. He also specifically states that “research into online political groups must clarify what counts as activism”. (2003, p.162)

What all social movements generally have in common, though, is their striving for change in society. How that change is supposed to come about, differs considerably from movement to movement. While some social movements just hope to gain more followers, so that ultimately their numbers will bring about a shift, others think only structural changes will make a difference. For this reason K. Lang and G. Lang¹³ have made the distinction between inward- and outward-oriented movements, which means that some movements are not trying to gain massive media attention, but rather strive to engage their immediate target audience, trying to gain *qualitative* mobilization (as cited in Rucht, 2004). Following this definition, WAF could be considered as inward-oriented, as they mainly focus on making the voices of their like-minded members heard.

Considering the above mentioned theory and literature on social movements, I define the Women Against Feminism page as an inward-oriented online social movement. They

¹³ Lang, K./Lang, G. (1961): Collective dynamics. New York: Crowell.

might not have the same organizational level as a regular social movement, which also operates offline, but they do have the potential to grow and to continue to make themselves heard more and more, by raising attention, discussing and being discussed and criticizing modern day feminism in a sometimes very provocative way.

3.4 Research questions

The aim of this research paper is to find out how an online social movement in its political communication online challenges the mainstream discourse about a political ideology. As the importance of online social movements and their potential has been discussed, it is now interesting to find out how feminism is defined by this online social movement as it challenges the ideology's self-perception and possibly changes the public image greatly. Therefore, what kind of picture do the Women Against Feminism construct of feminism? To find out what the discourse about feminism is and how it is viewed by the members of this online social movement, I decided to break it down into two main questions:

RQ 1: How do the Women Against Feminism define feminism or feminists?

RQ 2: How do the Women Against Feminism see themselves? What values and characteristics do they attribute to themselves?

The first research question aims at direct statements and opinions about feminists and their ideology, which is very straightforward and self-explanatory. The second research question was devised by looking through the research material where I noticed, that a lot of members of WAF describe themselves and their characteristics or values. In the context, this implies that the characteristics of the WAF do not apply to feminists. For example:

“I don't need feminism, because I LOVE my husband, and all men are NOT the same.”

This quote directly implies that feminists do not love their husbands (if they are even

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married) and that they think men are all the same. Obviously, this is an exaggerated statement and it most likely simply is not true. But those short, exaggerated and final statements are trying to prove a point. The WAF are playing with totalities and not with clear facts, but in doing so they paint a very precise picture of feminism. In describing themselves, they inevitably also describe feminism as they see it, because it implies that it must be the opposite of their values and characteristics.

This self-concept of the social movement is part of constructing the movement itself, as it gives members and potential members the possibility to see how they view themselves and what kind of values are shared. Members who already agree with these views and values will likely assume a stronger bond towards the movement, while non-members may find that they have similar traits, characteristics and belief systems, which may cause them to join the movement. Therefore, finding out what constitutes a social movement is the first step in analyzing it. In this specific case, the construction of self-image coincides directly with the construction of a public image of feminism as a political ideology.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In this following part, I will further describe my research object and explain the method by which I decided to conduct my analysis.

4 Qualitative content analysis – computer-assisted

Content analysis in general works with text, pictures and other symbolic material. It analyzes communication that is in some form recorded and therefore fixed (Mayring, 2008). Due to the fact that this social movement is quite new and there has been no research done on it yet, I decided to opt for a qualitative research approach. This allowed me to view the test material in a non-restricted and very open manner, so as not to forfeit important insights by applying a strict quantitative research design. Qualitative approaches are most

useful when there is little known about the subject to be investigated, such as a pilot study, or when there are no hypotheses to validate yet. Qualitative research in comparison to quantitative research aims to not only analyze processes, objects and relations, but rather to empathize with the test material and to try and relive it, as Mayring puts it (2008). Quantitative research tries to *explain* general phenomena and find regularities within, while qualitative research tries to *understand* particular cases.

4.1 The object of study – Women Against Feminism

The foregoing discussion of political communication online and online social movements was supposed to show the potential such virtual communities have and therefore reveal the relevance of analyzing them. This paper aims to comprehend a very critical, non-mainstream discourse about feminism. Without being extremist, this online community voices concerns and points of criticisms that have not been given serious thought or media coverage from a non-extremist point of view. The fact, that this view of feminism seems to gain an ever greater number of followers, might make it possible to change a debate about the modern American women's movement without instantaneously being branded as misogynistic and traditionalist. Therefore, I want to analyze what kind of opinions, emotions and attitudes are used by the WAF to paint a different picture of modern day feminism and how they characterize themselves in contrast to feminists.

The Women Against Feminism movement originally started with a Tumblr blog in mid-2013. The Facebook page went online in January 2014. Since then the page has acquired a total of 35,435 Likes, as of November 23rd 2015. The movement is still acquiring more and more followers, as it has increased by almost five thousand since June 23rd, 2015. The main activity on both sites are pictures by women of all kinds of ages, ethnicities and religions, who hold up a written sign that states why they themselves are against feminism, as shown by the example of fig. 2.

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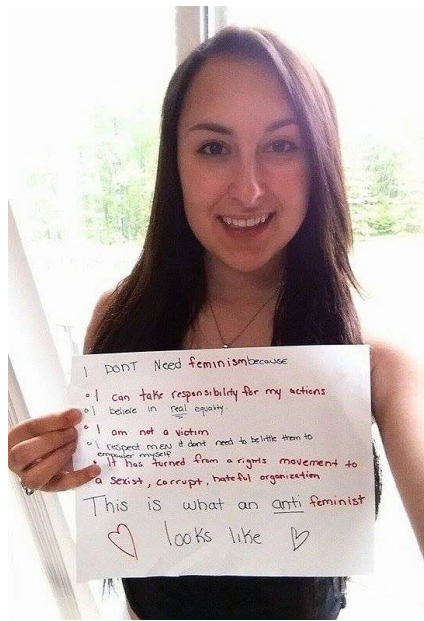


figure 2: example of one coding unit

"I don't need feminism because

- I can take responsibility for my actions*
- I believe in real equality*
- I am not a victim*
- I respect men & don't need to belittle them to empower myself*
- It has turned from a rights movement to a sexist, corrupt, hateful organization*

This is what an anti feminist look like"

The administrator of the Facebook page describes the community itself on the page shortly:

"Women's voices against modern feminism and its toxic culture. We're judging feminism by its actions, not by dictionary definitions. NOT an MRA [Men's Rights Activists, author's note] page, sorry."¹⁴ There are roughly 500 different photos of that sort on the Facebook page. A lot of discussion is usually being sparked by those photos especially since it is not compulsory to be a follower in order to see everything that goes on on the page and to comment on posts. Therefore, feminists and non-feminists regularly have arguments and debates on the site. Apart from those contributions from the Women Against Feminism, the page administrator frequently posts various articles and links relating to feminist issues and the like. It should also be noted, that the WAF Facebook page ranks on 4th place on Google when searching for the word "feminism", making it easily visible and retrievable for someone not even looking for it.

¹⁴ https://www.facebook.com/WomenAgainstFeminism/info?tab=page_info

4.2 Analytical context

When doing a qualitative content analysis, it is of great importance to explain the analytical context of the research material. Under which circumstances did the communication, that is being analyzed, originate? Who was the target audience? What was the intention of the communication? This is one of the benefits of qualitative research, because it takes these details into account. The WAF and their statements are expressions of discontent with the way feminism is today. It is important to understand, that all these women are not anti-woman, misogynistic or against equal rights. Some might be less liberal and lean towards conservative, but they are neither extremist in their views, nor completely unreasonable. Some of their statements are rather meaningless and plainly insulting toward feminists, while others include personal accounts of events, sometimes in connection with feminists, and others again deliver their opinions on various feminist issues. The apparent lack of hard facts on these photos should not render them unimportant, because the contributors to WAF are not trying to win an argument with one sheet of paper. They are as such trying to prove a point and express their feelings toward an ideology that claims to speak for them. By writing these statements and taking a picture with them, the first target audience was like-minded women (and men), who were trying to achieve a feeling of community and support from it, as shown in fig. 3.

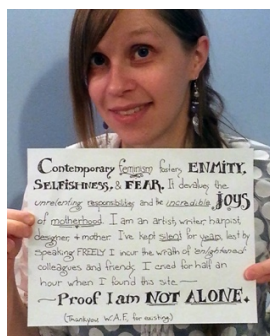


figure 3: woman who found solace in WAF

“Contemporary feminism fosters enmity, selfishness & fear. It devalues the unremitting responsibilities and the incredible joys of motherhood. I am an artist, writer, harpist, designer & mother. I’ve kept silent for years, lest by speaking FREELY I incur the wrath of ‘enlightened’ colleagues and friends. I cried for half an hour when I found this site.

Proof I am NOT ALONE.

(Thank you W.A.F., for existing)”

By now, the movement has become bigger and more and more people are starting to hear about it, which means that the target audience has grown and WAF have indicated that they are glad when being mentioned in online newspaper articles.

4.3 Sample

The sample for the qualitative content analysis encompasses a total of 150 photos. The sample was chosen on one main basic characteristic. Only handwritten signs, that also show that a person is holding the sign, were picked. Therefore, if a picture was edited with the computer to write a statement, or if the picture did not show a person, it was not included in the sample. There were more than 150 pictures that fulfilled this requirement, so the final sampling was conducted in such a way as to ensure that photos were taken from every month. There was a total of twenty-two months' worth of content from January 2014 to October 2015. To create an even sampling from all months, one would have to pick 6.8 pictures per month. Therefore, seven pictures per month were chosen, but as not every month had seven pictures that were only handwritten signs, additional ones were randomly selected from other months to create the sample of 150 photos.

4.4 Coding

There are various ways on how to conduct the coding in a qualitative content analysis. As one might want to approach the research material in a very open manner, the method used in "Grounded Theory" might present itself to be utile. This method is an inductive way of creating categories for coding. "Die Grounded Theory ist ein Forschungsstil, der die Generierung von Hypothesen und Theorien explizit in den Mittelpunkt stellt und in einem mehr-stufigen Prozess Kategorien am Material entwickeln will." (Kuckartz, 2012, p.67) This means that in a manner of repetitive coding, the categories will be created solely by using the research material itself, without thinking of a concept beforehand. For this analysis, however, I used a combination of inductive and deductive category creation for

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coding. More precisely, following Kuckartz' suggestion, I devised a set of main categories deductively, which were derived from my research questions. Using those I created subcategories while coding the material and did so in about three rounds of coding the material. I kept on revising my subcategories and sometimes merging two together, as I got more and more into the material. The final codebook includes six main categories or code groups and a total of 34 subcategories, as shown in the following depiction.

Degree of anonymity <i>The degree to which one can make out the identity of the women on the photographs. Some hide their face, some do not.</i>	• Fully visible face • Partly visible face • Face not visible, only body parts visible
How WAF define feminism/feminists <i>How WAF see and define feminism and feminists.</i>	• Women superiority/entitlement • Ignorant of real issues for women • Double Standards • Feminism turned sour • Weakens marriage and family • Unaccepting of differing views • Manhating
Opinions to feminist issues <i>Opinions to some of feminists main issues.</i>	• No patriarchy • Against Abortion • No pay gap • No rape culture • Women have same rights as men already
Values/Characteristics of WAF <i>Certain values and characteristics that define the WAF but imply that they do not go together with feminism.</i>	• Equality/Egalitarianism • Femininity • Rejection of Victimization/Objectification • Refusal of acknowledging oppression • Ability of critical thinking/making own decisions • Being a good housewife and mother • Taking responsibility for one's own actions

	• Strong women do not need feminism • Religion
Attitudes toward men <i>The various attitudes of WAF towards men. This includes their view of men's roles, their relationships, their recognition of male victims and men's issues.</i>	• Excusing male behavior • Loving relationships with male family and friends • Mutual respect/Being equal • Recognition of men's issues and male victims • Appreciation of male roles • Declaration of willing submission/serving a man/husband
Personal issues with feminists <i>Personal issues with feminism, such as negative experiences with them, clearly stating that they do not represent them and insults toward feminists.</i>	• Negative experiences with feminists • Unwanted representation • Insults towards feminists

Depiction: Code groups and their subcategories

The analysis was performed using the qualitative data analysis software *atlas.ti*, a computer program for qualitative data analysis of textual, graphical, audio and video data. The full analysis was carried out over a period of about ten days. Each picture is considered to be one research unit. Each sentence or bullet point was seen as a coding unit. Sometimes one coding unit would be coded with more than one category, because it clearly included both.

5 Results

In the following chapter, the codebook will be further explained by reference to the results. The reasons for selecting those specific main categories will be illustrated and their meaning more precisely exemplified, while also showing the results.

5.1 Degree of anonymity

One of the things that was apparent right away was the fact, that not every girl or woman showed her face in the picture she posted. Of the 150 analyzed pictures, sixty-eight showed

their full face and are therefore completely identifiable, while seventy-three only showed parts of their face, and eight did not show their face at all. Of the ones that had a partly visible face, some only showed their eye section or only half their face, making them somewhat recognizable, while others only showed their lower face including lips and chin, virtually making them non-identifiable to the general public. The few who only showed parts of their body other than their face, generally held the picture in front of their face, so only their fingers were visible, or held it in front of their torso, cutting off the section of their head.

There is a number of reasons why one might want to stay anonymous or mainly anonymous when picturing themselves with a political and controversial statement and then deciding to post it online. In general, the Internet can be a quite hostile place and repercussions such as hate speech or personal insults might be feared. Another reason could be that the person who makes a political statement knows that people in their circle of acquaintances and friends might not have the same opinion, and therefore do not want them to know how they feel. This can be especially true for non-mainstream opinions on certain issues, as is the case with WAF. Interestingly enough, some of the women stated on the pictures that they were afraid to show their identity, *because* of how they feared feminists.

Example 1:

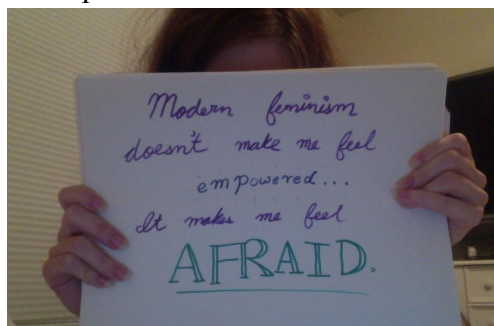


figure 4: Example 1 of degree of anonymity

*"Modern feminism doesn't make
me feel empowered...
It makes me feel AFRAID."*

Another reason are statements that are as such too personal to not be made anonymously, such as a comment from a sexual abuse victim, or a woman whose husband

had been, according to her, wrongly charged with sexual assault.

Example 2:

I DON'T NEED FEMINISM BECAUSE
They made it possible for a woman to falsely
accuse a man of sexual assault without ANY proof.
That man was sent to prison.
THAT MAN IS MY HUSBAND.
FEMINISM RUINED MY FAMILY.
#VETERAN #ARMY #SHARPVICTIM

Other women had no problem showing their full face, as they seemingly proudly and without fear of harassment expressed their views about feminism.

5.2 How WAF define feminism/feminists

This main category encompasses the seven subcategories which make up how feminism is defined by WAF. Hence, these will be more closely evaluated and shown. Most of them kept recurring, but some a lot less frequent than others. Nonetheless, all of the subcategories were included, so as to not leave anything out and give as complete as possible a picture of their views. The subcategories will be introduced now in order of most frequent to least frequent.

5.2.1 Manhating

This was the most common characterization of feminists and feminism in general, and also the most cliché one. It was criticized that feminists consider all men evil, guilty and potential rapists, because of their gender.

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Example 3:



figure 5: example 3 for manhating

My Brothers Are Guilty of Being Born MEN

They have been expected, since birth, to apologize for everything bad that has ever happened.

Men should NOT be born Apologizing.

This is Modern Feminism

I Do Not Need It.

I Do Not WANT It.

Example 4:

I DON'T NEED feminism
FEMINISM PROMOTES MAKING MEN OUR ENEMIES.
MEN AREN'T OUR ENEMIES.
- AN ANTI-FEMINIST

These examples, and many more, describe feminists as misandrists and manhaters. A lot of the WAF say, that they believe men are not all the same and therefore not all potential rapists, abusers and inherent oppressors. WAF believe that sexism against men exists and is prevalent in the feminist community. Further statements say that feminism belittles, demonizes and discriminates against men and that it has emasculated them.

5.2.2 Feminism turned sour

This category builds on the assumption that feminism has not always been bad. Quite the contrary, most members of WAF seem to appreciate what feminism has done for women to get equal rights. However, they believe that modern feminism or third wave feminism has taken it too far and turned a rights movement into a “hateful, corrupt and sexist organization”. A lot of the WAF analyzed for this paper specifically mention that it is

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“modern” or “third wave” feminism that they despise, and that it is not about ignoring the good things that feminism in general has brought to women in the Western world.

Example 5:

I'm no longer a 'feminist' because...
MODERN 3rd WAVE FEMINISM
ISN'T ABOUT WOMEN ANYMORE.
END OF STORY.

Example 6:

[...] Feminists have become the very thing they once sought to eradicate – tyrannical, oppressive 'Fear Mongers'. [...]

Example 7:



figure 6: example for feminism turned sour

I'M AN ANTI-FEMINIST
BECAUSE I BELIEVE FEMINISM TO BE A
HYPOCRITICAL HATE GROUP THAT
DOESN'T RECOGNIZE MEN'S ISSUES.
I WANT REAL EQUALITY, NOT PRIVILEGED
BULLSHIT.

WAF claim that feminism no longer stands for equality and by now comes with more rules than the “patriarchy”. Another important aspect is the belief, that feminism advocates rights without responsibilities and that they invented the “war on women”. Feminism also seems to only support women who “join their cult”, as one WAF put it, which brings us to the next category that defines feminism.

5.2.3 Unaccepting of differing views

The third most mentioned characteristic feminists embody according to WAF, is that they are unaccepting of views differing from theirs and that they exhibit aggressive behavior towards disagreement.

Example 8:

I don't need feminism in my life, only equality. I do not want to be

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part of a social movement that labels me as a ‘misogynist’ and a ‘bitch’ because I disagree with their views.

It seems that no small amount of the contributors of WAF have been shamed, scolded and insulted for not identifying as feminists or for calling themselves egalitarian. Apparently feminists cannot take disagreement and “shut down conversation as hate speech”. Another problem is misinformation.

Example 9:

I don’t need feminism because Feminism terrifies women with false info then claims only feminism can save them. Fear of rape does not define my life. [...]

As mentioned in chapter 2, there is discussion about certain so-called “feminist myths”, such as the statistic that one in four college women will be sexually assaulted in their time at college. Previous studies claimed it was one-in-five, however, the *New York Times* wrote about the Association of American Universities, who commissioned a new survey that included twenty-seven universities in the U.S., which came to the result of one-in-four (Pérez-Peña, 2015). As seen in Chapter 2, this statistic has been debunked by people like Christina Hoff Summers, even though it is still being used by high-profile politicians such as American President Barack Obama himself and therefore seems to be rather legitimate.

5.2.4 Double standards

This category evolved, because it repeatedly came up that WAF criticize feminists for preaching one thing and then doing the other. WAF has been denounced for not knowing what feminism means, which is why some of them decidedly explain they do know what the dictionary definition of this ideology is, but that feminists do not act accordingly.

Example 10:

I don’t need feminism because

- Feminism redefines ‘sexism’ & ‘patriarchy’ for their agenda

but screams out dictionary definitions of ‘feminism’ when it suits them.

- Feminism always fought for power for women but not the responsibilities. Power to vote but not responsibility of draft. Power to work outside but no responsibility to do high-risk jobs. I want both power & responsibility for all.

This is also one of the main points that the administrator of the WAF Facebook page used to describe their social movement. It says, they judge feminism by their actions and not by dictionary definitions. Obviously, the definition of feminism states that feminism is for equality for all or as it says in the Oxford Online Dictionary feminism is “the advocacy of women’s rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men”. Nevertheless, WAF are convinced that feminist actions do not match that definition.

Example 11:

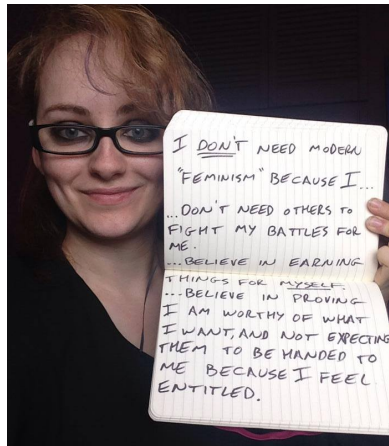
[...] I know the goddamn definition. I can prove we have all our rights. I don’t need to fight for what I already have. 2015 American feminism is lie-driven, entitled whining.

5.2.5 Female superiority/entitlement

Some of the categories do relate closely to each other and are not as separate from each other, as is required in quantitative analysis. They further determine one another. Such as the notion that feminism no longer strives for equality, because it has already been achieved decades ago, but now focuses instead on female superiority. On this note, it should not be forgotten that equality before the law is not the same thing as equality in how one is treated by society in general. But legally speaking women do have the same rights as men in the United States, even if the system does not treat them exactly the same. Additionally, the feeling that they are entitled to being treated well, simply because of their gender, is something that does not resonate well with most members of WAF.

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Example 12:



I DON'T NEED MODERN FEMINISM BECAUSE I ...

... don't need others to fight my battles for me.

... believe in earning things for myself.

... believe in proving I am worthy of what I want, and not expect them to be handed to me because I feel entitled.

figure 7: example for female superiority/entitlement

Some of the members from WAF mention that they do not believe in superiority, entitlement or patriarchy. One woman put it simple:

Example 13:

[...] I don't want to look DOWN on men, I want to look AT them.

5.2.6 Ignorant of real issues for women

This opinion towards feminism suggests that there is no oppression in the Western world, while there is actual oppression happening in other parts of the world, where women would need feminism's help. It is being criticized that U.S. feminists do nothing to help actual women in need, but rather complain about issues that are not even real and only refer to those women when they need them to suit their arguments and that they "use minorities as a tool".

Example 14:

I need feminism because deep down, I understand that women elsewhere have infinitely worse rights, but I am too lazy and weak to actually help them or fight for them. Instead, I will fight literally anyone over imagined slights like 'microaggressions' and 'internalized misogyny', so that I can hide from real issues and feel like I made a difference.

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This statement is clearly sarcastic and mentions two feminist terms that are being ridiculed by WAF. Needless to say, this statement got a lot of support since it was posted on a page for like-minded people. Interestingly enough, it is one of the very few statements that did not provoke feminists to say something against it or try and defend themselves, which they do on a regular basis on the WAF Facebook page. Example 15 follows a similar approach:

Example 15:



figure 8: example of ignorant for real issues

I don't need feminism because I live in a country where I am FREE. England, America, etc. don't NEED feminism. The people that need feminism are the poor Saudi girls forced to marry and have kids by 13. The Syrian boys who are forced to fight with guns at the age of 11. The women in India who are shunned/killed because they reported that they were raped. HELP THEM

'Manspreading' doesn't sound so bad now, does it?

It can be safely assumed that these women or girls who are members of WAF are not all experts on countries like India, Syria or Saudi Arabia, but these are their opinions. When she refers to *manspreading*, she means a term that has recently been added to the Online Oxford Dictionary: “The practice whereby a man, especially one travelling on public transport, adopts a sitting position with his legs wide apart, in such a way as to encroach on an adjacent seat or seats.” A rude behavior that has lead to a big campaign of the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority. The word itself has been criticized as sexist, since it only refers to male passengers and their behavior, while ignoring that female passengers might also take up extra seats with their bags (Conner Martin, 2015). WAF are seemingly questioning the meaningfulness of such debates.

5.2.7 Weakens marriage and family

Five women clearly stated that they believe feminism, willingly or by default, destroys family values and the importance of marriage, as well as devaluing motherhood (see fig.2).

Example 16:

[...] Feminists want to destroy families and relationships by turning women and men against each other.

Example 17:

I don't need feminism because...
[...] it weakens marriage and undermines the family unit. [...]

5.3 Opinions to feminist issues

In this code group five main feminist issues, that were continuously mentioned, could be identified. The most common: *Women already have the same rights as men*. This one is based on the assumption that feminists are trying to fight a war that has already been won, and that in 2015 women have the same legal protection as men. They are allowed to vote, get an education, work outside the home, run for office, etc. Some members of WAF claim that they were never told to *not* pursue a certain career because they are a woman or never felt discriminated in the workplace. A justified retort from feminists in that respect is, that one cannot project one's character onto others. Therefore, just because it never happened to them, does not mean it never happens to anyone. However, this goes both ways and merely because someone experienced discrimination does not mean everybody else needs to agree with a certain ideology that fits said person. Like the following example expresses, women do not *have* to be feminists, just because they are women.

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Example 18:



figure 9: example of opinions to feminist issues 1

I don't need feminism because...

- *Men are not the enemy*
- *Feminism is not compulsory for women*
- *I have the same rights as men!*

Other feminist topics, about which WAF expressed their opinions, were *patriarchy*, *wage gap* and *rape culture*. The members of WAF all agree that these three concepts do not exist. The wage gap has to do with certain statistics that have been both refuted and strengthened. However, there are reasons to believe that the findings about the wage gap exclude important factors such as the fact, that more women tend to choose lower paying fields like education and social work, while more men work in high-paying STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields. As mentioned before though, there are plenty of statistics pointing in either direction. However, WAF are steadfast in their beliefs, just as much as feminists are. This readily applies to the other two concepts mentioned:

Example 19:



figure 10: example of opinions to feminist issues 2

I Don't Need Feminism Because...

- *Fem doesn't mean equality*
- *The pay gap is women's choice, not sexism*
- *The patriarchy doesn't exist*
- *Most victims of street violence are men*
- *I'm responsible for my own actions*
- *There is no rape culture*

Another notion being shared by some of the community, is the aversion to abortion. This sentiment against abortion is unlikely shared by the whole community. However, the

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ones who are against abortion, assume that feminists view abortion as some kind of empowerment, which is being heavily condemned.

Example 20:



*I DON'T NEED
FEMINISM COZ I
DON'T CONSIDER KILLING UNBORN
BABIES AS A SIGN OF EMPOWERMENT*

figure 11: example of opinions to feminist issues 3

Once again, this is quite an extreme way to view women's right to decide over their own bodies and definitely cannot be generalized in any way. But of the 150 pictures analyzed only seven mentioned this radical view.

5.4 Values/characteristics of WAF

The most defining characteristic that members of WAF give themselves is, that they are strong women and that strong women do not need feminism. They believe respect should be earned and not handed to someone and they do not need or want feminism to “help” them succeed in life. On the contrary, they assume feminism is making women look weak and feeble-minded and that apparently anyone who does not agree with feminists must be “brainwashed by the patriarchy”. The second most common value that the WAF seem to share is their pro-equality attitude. They want to create a new movement, most often called “egalitarianism”, which is about what the WAF consider “real” equality. Some paraphrase it and say they believe in human rights and not special treatment or privileges for anyone. Other characteristics and values include the complete rejection of victimization and objectification, refusal of acknowledging any kind of oppression, which might or might not take place, being a good housewife and mother, which sometimes meant willingly giving up a career for the family, the ability of critical thinking and making decisions on their own,

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taking responsibility for their own actions, instead of blaming them on men, embracing their femininity, and in two cases, religion. The following two examples highlight the values of critical thinking/making one's own choices and valuing being a good housewife and mother.

Example 21:

I DON'T NEED CONTEMPORARY WESTERN FEMINISM AS
I DO NOT BELIEVE WOMEN MUST ALL ACT AND THINK
THE SAME WAY; IT IS FOR THE *INDIVIDUAL* TO CHOOSE.

Example 22:

I don't need feminism because...
I'm enjoying my role as a supportive wife. I love that my man is
the head of my household. And I value being a stay at home mom,
over slaving for a corporation while neglecting my family.

5.5 Attitudes toward men

Another question that presented itself during the analysis was: what role do men play in this social movement? The WAF are basically a movement of women against other women, so how do men fit into this? What are the WAF attitudes toward men? This code group was broken down into six subcategories, which are listed below in order of most common to least common:

Loving relationships with male family and friends: Mentioning of male friends or relatives and their importance to those women.

Recognition of men's issues and male victims: Recognizing that men also have certain issues and face problems unique to their gender, as well as the mentioning of male victims of various crimes, such as rape or street violence, or recognizing inequalities to counter the assumption that only female victims are worth protecting.

Mutual respect/being equal: The relationships these women have with various men in their life are considered to be shaped by mutual respect for each other, and they feel that they are being each other's equal.

Appreciation of male roles: Appreciating that men play certain "male" roles in society and in relationships, also expressions of the love for typical masculine behaviors.

The above mentioned attitudes toward men were more frequent, while those last two were only mentioned by four women each.

Excusing male behavior: Excusing certain behaviors that feminists are criticizing, that WAF do not consider to be oppressive or harassing, mainly catcalling and male attention from strangers.

Declaration of willing submission/serving a man: Women declaring that they love to obtain a submissive and/or serving role for their partners and family.

5.6 Personal issues with feminists

This last category includes all the personal feelings toward and experiences with feminists themselves. This is mainly not a disapproval of feminism as an ideology, but is rather directed at feminists themselves. This code group has only three subcategories namely *insults towards feminists*, *negative experiences with feminists* and *unwanted representation*. It should be fairly obvious that none of the Women Against Feminism want feminists to represent them or speak for them, however, this category was included because some explicitly mentioned this. The great majority of this code group in some way claimed being either bullied, insulted or threatened by feminists, which obviously created fear, distrust and aversion.

Example 23:

[...] I refuse to join a hate movement.

Feminists have:

- Told me to kill myself

- Threatened me
- Told me I was a failed abortion
- Told me I was a disgrace to women
- Told me I should be raped

There are quite a few of these accounts, some claiming feminists have abused, shamed or insulted them by telling them they should get sexually assaulted or beaten, or have at the very least excused violence towards people who disagree. Some members mention being scared of feminists, while others just insulted them back. While this is not very constructive criticism, feminists are considered to be selfish, judgmental, hypocritical, negative, bigoted, delusional, insecure and lie-driven, among other things.

5.7 Who are the Women Against Feminism?

There was no methodological analysis of demographic characteristics, for two reasons:

First, there would not have been a reliable way to analyze age, religion, nationality and ethnicity by just looking at pictures, instead it would have come down to guessing at best. Secondly, this is not a quantitative analysis, hence the need did not present itself. However, I did notice some demographical features and while I will mention them, it is important to be aware that these are merely observational results and therefore they do not claim accuracy.

Most of the WAF look to be in the age group 16-35 years, with only some women who might be older than 45 years. The majority are Caucasian American women, but other ethnicities/races such as Asian-Americans, Afro-Americans, Latinas, Indian and also Muslim women seem to be part of WAF as well. The main contributors on the pictures seem to be Americans, but the occasional French and even Polish member exists. Their origin becomes more evident when they comment on the Facebook page. This shows that the WAF have become known beyond the U.S. and may continue to broaden their publicity in the future.

6 Interpretation

Now that it is clear how Women Against Feminism views feminism and themselves, the question is why and how did they get to these conclusions? In order to have more insight into these questions, the following pages will include a number of issues and topics that in the past years have been raised and discussed in the traditional press, as well as online. These examples, that portray possible reasons for the conclusions and opinions of WAF, are neither a complete picture of issues, nor all directly mentioned by the WAF and do not necessarily influence their views. In order to make such a claim one would need further research into this social movement. However, they have been widely discussed especially in the United States and, therefore, it can be assumed that they are known to a lot of the members of WAF.

The first thing that can be identified, when looking at and analyzing the photos of members of WAF, is the fact that the WAF are very provocative in their ideas about feminism. They are also very unyielding in their opinions and they believe that they are right to do so. The WAF paint a stereotypical picture of feminists that has essentially been around since the early 80s, but there are much more recent incidents that have strengthened these views. Twitter hashtags like *#killallmen* and the repeated citation of misleading rape statistics, such as the ones from the 2014 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report on sexual and intimate violence, which claimed that nearly one in five women has been raped in the U.S. (Young, 2014), do not make it easier for feminists who truly are for gender equality. Especially since misleading statistics, that are being confuted, take away from real victims and make people question the sincerity of claims of sexual violence or other discriminative or violent acts. Feminists claim that they are for equality for women as well as men, but they justify concentrating on women's issues more because, according to them, women still need more work done to actually be equal to men. However, in one

article for the *The Guardian*, which is in fact to be considered a very feminist friendly newspaper, Chalabi writes:

[...] justice isn't a relative concept. If it were, we could suggest we should care less about racism against black people just because Asian people in this country are more likely to be victims of racially-motivated hate crime.

Obviously that's nonsense. But so might be ignoring issues that affect men more severely than women just because women, overall, have it worse. (2013)

This could be considered a statement that would resonate well with the members of WAF after their values have been analyzed. Nonetheless, this small study just showed a certain portion of how WAF construct their image of feminism. The statements, that feminists seem to be unaccepting of differing views and even act aggressively towards disagreeing women (and men), come from personal experience of the WAF. Whether these experiences are legitimate cannot be verified and are obviously very subjective, however, it may be safe to assume that these women do have their reasons for being against feminism.

The sometimes quite aggressive and sarcastic tone of the WAF might imply that women feel threatened rather than empowered by feminism and feminists. Especially if they have been attacked verbally and most probably online, when voicing concerns or disparate views about certain issues. This is rather ironic considering the new UN report on the “Cyber Violence against Women and Girls” which has just been published in 2015.

It warns about the extremely harmful effects of cyber violence that women endure all around the world and how the Internet needs to be made a place where women feel safe

and supported (UN Women/UNDP, 2015)¹⁵, hence portraying women as victims and never as perpetrators.

Nevertheless, the members of WAF do not like to view themselves as victims and oppressed citizens by a patriarchal system, that simply includes all men as part of it. It is not hard to imagine that they do not want to put themselves in a lower position compared to people they love and cherish such as their boyfriend, husband, brother or father. Albeit radical feminists are not the majority, they sometimes are the loudest and also the ones who threaten other women, who do not identify with the movement and never will, if it means having to “accept” that they are being oppressed or disadvantaged because of their gender. However, the view of women as victims is not one only shared by radical feminists. On the contrary, the basic feminist view, that we live in a patriarchy inevitably leads to the assumption that men are privileged because of their gender and therefore are in a position of power, in comparison to women who are not, which goes against the beliefs of the WAF. As journalist and author Cathy Young points out, this view of women as victims, which was certainly constructed by patriarchal systems throughout history and that feminists are upholding to this day, is actually one of the most traditional ones (2015, October). Young suggests, that instead feminists should focus on women who are achieving, heroic and who are in positions of power and celebrate them, making those an inspiring example for women everywhere. In theory, the WAF who consider themselves to be pro-equality and for human rights, as well as considering themselves strong women, share the same characteristics and values that most moderate feminists claim to have about gender equality.

¹⁵ The report has been withdrawn by the UN after a lot of criticism and cannot be found online anymore. Due to a wide array of mistakes in the report the UN issued an apology for this report. However, the author of this thesis still has the original report downloaded. Since the fact that the report has been taken down proves a strong point in this thesis, the source will not be revoked.

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However, in claiming to be pro-equality but against superiority, the WAF actually contradict themselves. They state that feminism has already achieved equality for women, so any further crying for the same rights is just about superiority of women and sexism towards men. And yet, they consider themselves to be for equality, which must mean that equality has not been fully achieved yet. It could also point to their conclusion that by now men, at least in certain aspects which have been mentioned in Chapter 3.3, have it worse, therefore once more creating an imbalance.

The WAF's attitudes towards men suggest that the way men are supposedly treated by feminists is an additional area in which they feel threatened by feminists, because they want to protect their own male family and friends from accusations and condemnation, while some also enjoy a more traditional distribution of roles. The biggest issue that has presented itself throughout this analysis, is the fact that WAF are of the opinion that feminists do not accept the life choices they made and cannot understand their disagreeing views on certain topics. Therefore, it is impossible for these women to ever consider themselves to be feminist, for they do not feel welcome in this ideology. Why would someone be so openly against an ideology that they do not agree with instead of just ignoring it? Possibly because *this* ideology claims to speak for half the population of the world, but is effectively an ideology with a political agenda, a lot of resources and a very loud and powerful voice. It should not be forgotten that feminism is a strong institution in the United States and that feminist lobbyists have already succeeded in further changing and implementing laws, that benefit women while adversely affecting men and boys, subsequently also leading to censorship, hysteria and the destruction of some men's careers and lives. Kitchens mentions the following example in her article for *Time Magazine*: female students launched a petition to cancel a Robin Thicke concert because his lyrics of the song *Blurred Lines* is sexist and oppressive to women (the song has actually been

banned at twenty British universities) (2014). Other examples such as trigger warnings were mentioned earlier in Chapter 3.2.

Another alarming development is the increasing number of false rape accusations (which was also mentioned by a WAF member), where the accuser may stay anonymous while the accused man can be officially named in the media, even if there is no evidence at all, let alone a conviction. In an article for *The Guardian*, U.S. law professor, Lisa Avalos said that false allegations are treated in the U.S. with a misdemeanor offence, instead of a felony and that even when found guilty most women are not even jailed (Laville, 2014). However, false rape allegations have the potential to destroy a man's life and career, because even though the legal system is supposed to consider any accused innocent until proven guilty, usually the world around these people does not see it this way. As soon as it becomes official, that a man has been accused of rape, it might very well be the end of his career and social life. There are plenty of examples of this happening. It is especially true for how rape or sexual assault allegations are being handled in colleges in the United States, where campus judicial systems are treating these allegations instead of handing them over to police, due to feminist efforts, and where students can be rightfully expelled, when found guilty by campus courts.

In April 2011, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights sent a letter to college and university presidents laying out guidelines for handling reports of sexual assault and harassment. One key recommendation was that such complaints should be evaluated based on a 'preponderance of the evidence'-the lowest standard of proof used in civil claims. (In lay terms, it means that the total weight of the believable evidence tips at least slightly in the claimant's favor.) (Young, 2014, n.p.)

The factor that there are men who might be victims of wrongful accusations, since the CDC's definition of rape is incredibly vague and almost any sexual conduct can be viewed

as sexual assault by young women who willingly act out of vindictiveness, is being ignored by colleges. Of course, this is not the case in the majority of complaints, however, these incidents do exist and they become more widely known as a greater number of men fight against unfair expulsions, which contribute to outrage among men, as well as women, as seen in the social movement of WAF. As an illustration, there was the case of a student named Caleb Warner, who was found guilty for sexual assault by the University of North Dakota (UND) tribunal in 2009 and therefore expelled. The police found him to be innocent and was searching for his accuser because she was charged by North Dakota law enforcement for making a false report and lying to the police. However, it took one and a half years and the help of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) until Warner's case was reexamined by the UND and he was allowed to be readmitted (TheFire.org, 2011, October).

Further regulations that seem to be overshooting their initial goal are sexual harassment guidelines in workplaces, which have also been implemented after feminist lobbyists fought for it. Janice Fiamengo, Professor of English at the University of Ottawa, who identifies as an anti-feminist, brings attention to this in one of her YouTube videos about the "Myth of Sexual Harassment" (2015, December 12). Among many others she cites an article of *The Star*, which claims that one million, mostly female, Canadian workers have been sexually harassed in the past two years, according to an Angus Reid survey (Wright, 2014). In this survey, sexual harassment by their definition includes actions such as "sexually charged talk" and "unwelcome sexual advances", which could include things such as bad jokes or asking someone out on a date, depending on which workplace behavior is seen as appropriate by someone (Angus Reid, 2014). Seventy-eight percent state that they did not report the incident of sexual harassment to their employer. The two most common reasons for this were that 44% preferred to "deal with it on their own" and a total

of 26% of respondents said they did not report the incident because they “felt the issue was too minor” (Angus Reid, 2014). Assuming minor incidents never went beyond verbal “harassment”, including jokes, suggestive comments and even compliments according to Fiamengo, this leads to the idea that mostly anything can be considered sexual harassment and that women are encouraged to come forward even if they see such actions as trivial (2015). One might argue, that women know what sexual harassment and sexism is and when they experience it they would make use of legislation and step forward to issue a complain. However, a 2011 study from Julia C. Becker and Janet K. Swim, which was published in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, suggests that women and men do not recognize a certain form of sexism that is prevalent today. This specific form of sexism is called “Benevolent Sexism” and includes actions such as a man helping a woman with a task such as carrying shopping bags or offering to drive for a long drive, chivalrous acts such as holding a door open for a woman or insisting on paying for her dinner, as well as complimenting her for an ability that is particularly “appropriate” for women such as her skillful cooking or ability of being a good mother (Becker and Swim, 2011). Further Benevolent Sexist beliefs, that were used as items in the study include men saying they cherish women and that every man ought to have a woman he adores (Becker and Swim, 2011). Such studies encourage women to call men out on being sexist, even if they do not feel sexually harassed at all. It understandably seems as quite a stretch to consider common courtesy of men towards women sexist, which is one more reason why WAF may feel threatened by and are against feminists and their negative views about male behavior.

The above mentioned incidents, examples and illustrations are an interpretation of why and how the WAF might have come to their conclusions about feminism. They see feminism as man-hating, superiority grabbing, weak and deceptive while they consider themselves to be pro-equality, strong, feminine, self-reflecting individuals. The

illustrations were included in this paper, so readers who are not familiar with the feminist debate and feminist issues in the United States gain a further understanding of what kind of problems are being discussed and even fought about between feminists and non-feminists in the US. Yet, in no way does the author claim completeness of these issues.

7 Conclusion

By claiming to be for equality for all and against discriminations of all sorts of people, it is hard to disagree with feminists publicly because if somebody is against feminism, he or she is immediately labelled as misogynistic or anti-equality. This makes it nearly impossible to engage in meaningful debate or give constructive criticism in order to discuss men's and women's issues as mentioned above. This is exactly the reason why I deem the social movement of Women Against Feminism, inconspicuous and ridiculed as it may be by some, important in order to open up the possibility of having a reasoned and respectful discourse about where feminism is going, what some of its goals are, what concerns and objections non-feminists might have about it and why. This basically includes the factors that should apply to *any* political communication and debate about an ideology.

It all seems to boil down to the question, that if you hold beliefs about gender equality do you necessarily also have to support a political ideology with a certain agenda and their propaganda, just because those beliefs are a core part of said ideology? Feminism is politics. It is not just a set of beliefs about how the world we live in should look. It is a strong and very diverse movement with a political agenda that might not appeal to everyone who shares some of their core values. One could compare it to democracy. Just because a person believes in democracy, the freedom of speech and the freedom to be part of decisions that shape our lives, does not mean one has to agree with a certain party. It does not even mean one has to agree with *any* party for that matter. Maybe there is none out

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there at the moment that one completely identifies with or that one feels to represent one's own values appropriately. You can criticize these parties and even openly fight against some of the things they are doing, but that does not necessarily make you fight democracy. If anything, the freedom to fight for your own values, to speak up, debate with and criticize others, is exactly what democracy meant people to do all along. It seems to me, that this is a comparable issue with feminism. Except for the matter of fact, that the women's movement is a very adamant movement with not a lot of room for criticism. Either you are for them and agree with them, or you are against women, too traditional, conservative to the point of being extremist, ungrateful for what feminism has accomplished for you (in case you are a woman), or even a "rape apologist". Of course, there are extremists in either direction, male and female. There are man-hating feminists, who despise the institution of marriage and consider stay-at-home-moms to be weak-minded victims, oppressed by the patriarchy. And then, there are woman-hating men, who threaten to rape women when they speak up against injustices, who consider women to be lesser than men and deserve to be put in their place, so to speak. However, demonizing every form of dissent and lashing out at critics is not going to help improve the image of feminism. And sadly so, because we *do* still need to fight for gender equality. We *do* still need to address issues such as teaching boys *and* girls about love, intimacy, relationships and consent. Men and women may be different, they may be not so different in some instances, but they are not exactly the same. Obviously girls can be good at science and engineering, and boys can be good at cooking and caring for others. In no way are women inferior as CEOs and managers and men can be great housemen and dads raising their kids. The whole point is that in our Western society we get to *choose* what role we want to play in our own lives and it seems that this is what the online social movement of Women Against Feminism is about.

Their recurring values show that they can identify with one another and share the same ideas about feminism, but it cannot be known as to what extent their opinions against feminism and their pro-equality stance actually renders real changes in their lives. Will they ever go from just being *against* feminism to doing something *for* equality? It is hard to say and as mentioned in Chapter 4 about Political Communication Online, making themselves heard can already be considered as activist doing. Making non-mainstream views more widespread and therefore, over a matter of time, more accepted may already be the kind of start that will change the political and social debate about gender and equality on a bigger scale.

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Abstract English

This paper deals with an American online social movement of women who are against feminism. Feminism in the United States is a very strong institution with a lot of power but barely room for criticism. This social movement presents a different non-extremist viewpoint of feminism which has the potential to change the discourse about this political ideology. Through a qualitative content analysis of the social movement the self-image of its members and subsequently their definition of modern feminism is shown and presented. Beforehand the history of feminism in the U.S., as well as the theoretical concept of antifeminism are discussed. The importance of political communication online and discursive activism as a tool to scrutinize and challenge the mainstream opinion about an ideology are shown. Possible reasons for the emergence of the Women Against Feminism movement are listed and the importance of criticism for the evolvement of a political

ideology is discussed. The results show that the main characteristics and values of the members of WAF do not differ that much from feminists themselves. The members of WAF are not against equality or feminism in its core, but against how the American version of this ideology morphed into an organization, that focuses on irrelevant issues while trying to gain superiority over men.

Abstract Deutsch

Diese Forschungsarbeit behandelt eine amerikanische soziale Onlinebewegung, welche aus Frauen besteht, die sich gegen Feminismus aussprechen. In den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika ist Feminismus eine sehr starke Institution mit viel Einfluss, jedoch kaum Raum für Kritik. Diese soziale Bewegung präsentiert einen anderen nicht extremistischen Blickwinkel von Feminismus, welcher das Potenzial hat, den Diskurs über diese politische Ideologie zu verändern. Mittels einer qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse der sozialen Bewegung wird das Selbstbild der Mitglieder und im Zuge dessen auch ihre Definition von modernem Feminismus erhoben und präsentiert. Zu Beginn wird sowohl ein Überblick über die geschichtliche Entstehung des Amerikanischen Feminismus gegeben, als auch das theoretische Konzept von Antifeminismus diskutiert. Die Relevanz von politischer Kommunikation im Onlinebereich und des Diskursiven Aktivismus als ein Werkzeug zur Kontrolle und Infragestellung der Mehrheitsmeinung über eine Ideologie werden gezeigt. Es werden mögliche Gründe für die Entstehung der „Women Against Feminism“ gegeben und die Bedeutung von Kritik für die Weiterentwicklung einer politischen Ideologie werden erörtert. Die Ergebnisse der Inhaltsanalyse zeigen, dass die Haupteigenschaften und Werte der Mitglieder von WAF sich von jenen der Feministen kaum unterscheiden. Die Angehörigen von WAF sind nicht gegen Gleichheit oder Feminismus in seiner Ursprungsbedeutung, sondern gegen die Art und Weise wie amerikanischer Feminismus

sich in eine Organisation verwandelt hat, die sich auf irrelevante Probleme fokussiert, während sie Überlegenheit gegenüber Männern zu erlangen versucht.