

Decoding gender bias through a textual exploration of Reddit /r/MensRights community

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Abstract

With a specific focus on the /r/MensRights subreddit, the linguistic landscape of the “manosphere” is examined to identify and analyze patterns of sexist rhetoric. The “manosphere” on Reddit refers to a collection of communities that discuss perceived men’s issues, often characterized by themes of men’s rights activism and anti-feminism. Employing natural language processing techniques and transformer models for sentiment analysis, the research uncovers prevalent language structures indicative of gender bias within this community. Utilizing n-gram analysis, the aim is to provide insights into the language dynamics contributing to the perpetuation of gender-based discourse. By examining the framing of gender issues and opinionated language, the research aims to shed light on how members of the men’s rights community discuss gender issues, including attitudes towards feminism, perceptions of male-related issues, and overall perspective surrounding men and women. This study strives to contribute to a broader understanding of online communities and their influence on shaping attitudes towards gender.

Keywords

manosphere, sexism, gender bias, reddit, social media discourse, language patterns, natural language processing

**Analiza uprzedzeń związanych z płcią
w tekstach społeczności Reddit /r/MensRights
na Reddicie**

Abstrakt

Skupiając się na subreddicie /r/MensRights, badany jest krajobraz językowy „manosfery” w celu zidentyfikowania i analizy wzorców sexistowskiej retoryki. „Manosfera” na Reddicie odnosi się do zbioru społeczności, które omawiają postrzegane problemy mężczyzn, często charakteryzujące się tematyką aktywizmu na rzecz praw mężczyzn oraz antyfeminizmu. Wykorzystując techniki przetwarzania języka naturalnego oraz modele transformatorów do analizy sentymentu, niniejsze badanie ma na celu przyjrzenie się powszechnym strukturom językowym wskazującym na obecność uprzedzeń związanych z płcią w tejże społeczności. Poprzez analizę n-gramową celem jest zbadanie dynamiki języka przyczyniającego się do utrwalania dyskursu opartego na płci. Analizując ramy kwestii płci oraz opiniotwórczego języka, badanie skupia się na sposobach, w jaki członkowie społeczności /r/MensRights dyskutują o kwestiach płci, w tym w odniesieniu do feminizmu, postrzegania problemów związanych z mężczyznami oraz ogólnego punktu widzenia na temat mężczyzn i kobiet. Celem niniejszej pracy jest szersze zrozumienie społeczności internetowych i ich wpływu na kształtowanie postaw wobec płci.

Słowa kluczowe

manosfera, seksizm, uprzedzenia płciowe, reddit, dyskurs mediów społecznościowych, wzorce językowe, przetwarzanie języka naturalnego

1. Introduction

In recent years, the proliferation of online communities within the “manosphere” has brought to light dynamics surrounding gender ideologies, particularly concerning masculinity, feminism, and societal norms. Among these Reddit communities, /r/MensRights has emerged as a platform where discourse revolves around men’s issues, ranging from critiques of gender roles to advocacy for men’s rights in legal and social contexts. This study adopts a focused approach on /r/MensRights within the manosphere for several reasons. Firstly, the subreddit boasts an active user base, providing a rich dataset for analysis that reflects ongoing discussions. Secondly, a single-community focus enables a thorough examination of how gendered discourses specific to /r/MensRights as a representative of “manosphere” communities manifests. Furthermore, some previous research, such as Farrell et al. (2019), has excluded /r/MensRights from comprehensive examinations of manosphere communities, with this study seeking to address this gap by focusing specifically on /r/MensRights.

1.1. Research objectives

This study aims to unravel the language dynamics within /r/MensRights in the context of Reddit “manosphere” communities, focusing on how members frame and discuss gender issues as well as opinionated language related to dynamics between men and women. The research goals involve identifying and analyzing instances of opinionated language, including potential gender biases, within a self-proclaimed online community advocating for men’s rights “criticized for the promotion of misogynistic language, toxic masculinity, and discourses that reinforce alt-right ideologies” (LaViolette and Hogan, 2019). The primary goals of this research include the following:

(1) Exploring sexist language in a Reddit community:

The first objective of this study is to conduct an in-depth exploration of sexist language prevalent within /r/MensRights. Thus, instances of gender-biased language, encompassing the various forms and frequencies of such expressions will be investigated. This exploration aims to highlight the prevalence and dynamics of gender-related discourse within the online community under investigation, rather than focusing on inferring deeper semantic meanings.

(2) Analyzing common n-grams to identify patterns:

This research objective involves a detailed analysis of common n-grams within the selected Reddit community, /r/MensRights. N-grams, defined as sequences of adjacent words, will be investigated in order to discern recurring patterns and linguistic structures associated with sexist language. By employing natural language processing (NLP) techniques, the underlying structures and associations that contribute to the perpetuation of gender bias in online discourse are explored. The objective of this analysis is to confirm, through a different methodological lens, the assertions made by previous researchers regarding the influence of an online Manosphere community on gender divide framing.

(3) Investigating the relationship between language and gender bias and gender issues

The third objective focuses on investigating the framing of gender issues in the view of language use and gender bias within the Reddit community. By focusing on n-gram patterns, this investigation aims to shed light on the ways in which language may influence or reinforce perceptions of gender norms and the discussion of gender-related topics within the community including attitudes towards feminism, perceptions of male-related issues, and the perpetuation of victim mentality.

1.2. Definition of terminology

In this subsection, clear definitions of key terminology used throughout the analysis will be provided in order to facilitate a better understanding of the defined research goals and later findings. The following definitions are an amalgamation of existing research and are suggested by the authors:

- (1) **Sexist language:** “Sexist language” is seen as a broader term that encompasses language that discriminates against individuals or groups based on their gender. It includes not only language that overtly denigrates or belittles women (misogynistic language) but is an indicator of ongoing gender divide and perceived conflict, as Mills (2008) calls it.
- (2) **Misogynistic language:** Language that expresses hatred or disdain towards women. It encompasses various forms of verbal abuse, derogatory comments, and discriminatory speech aimed specifically at women.
Note: In this paper, the term “sexist language” will be used rather than “misogynistic language”, with sexism seen as encompassing a broader range of discriminatory expressions based on gender, which is explained in section 2.1.
- (3) **Anti-feminist:** An “anti-feminist” position opposes or rejects feminist ideology, principles, or goals. Individuals who identify as anti-feminist may disagree with feminist perspectives on gender equality, women’s rights, or social and political issues. Such stances include the critique of feminist movements, policies, or activism and advocate for traditional gender roles or the status quo.
- (4) **Gender-biased language:** Gender-biased language encompasses language that reflects or perpetuates stereotypes, prejudices, or unequal treatment based on gender. This includes language that privileges one gender over another or reinforces societal norms and expectations related to gender roles and identities as such.
- (5) **Opinionated language:** Opinionated language refers to language that expresses strong opinions, beliefs, or attitudes, often without objective evidence or factual basis. This can

include language that is biased, subjective, or emotionally charged, reflecting the individual's personal views or biases.

- (6) Gender-divide language:** “Gender-divide language” refers to language that reinforces or perpetuates divisions, inequalities as well as perceived tensions between genders. This can include language that emphasizes differences between men and women, promotes gender stereotypes, or contributes to the polarization of gender-related issues.

This clarification of terms ensures transparency and clarity in their usage throughout the study, thereby enhancing the understanding of gender discourse within the /r/MensRights online community.

2. Literature review

This study delves into the dynamics of gender discourse within online communities, particularly focusing on /r/MensRights within the broader manosphere. We start by exploring the fundamental distinctions between sexism and misogyny, aiming to illustrate the nuanced differences between these terms and our rationale for using the term “sexist language” in our research. Next, we investigate sexism in online spaces, analyzing how these attitudes manifest within online communities, with a particular emphasis on platforms like Reddit. This section also explores radicalized perspectives prevalent in online forums like Reddit. Furthermore, we consider the concept of gender bias within the context of online communities (supposedly) advocating for men's rights. Additionally, we navigate the complexities of manosphere communities, examining their diverse landscape of ideologies and agendas, and how these shape discussions on gender issues online. Lastly, we outline natural language processing methods for analyzing gender discourse, detailing the computational techniques used to uncover patterns in online discussions within manosphere communities. Collectively, these explorations aim to provide a thorough review of research

surrounding gender in online spaces, with a specific focus on /r/MensRights as a case study.

2.1. Underlying differences between sexism and misogyny

While “sexism” and “misogyny” tend to be used interchangeably, as stated by Sloan (2017), “misogyny and sexism are two different issues, but both are demonstrations of differential, negative treatment undertaken [...]” (2017: 63). Sexism, defined as prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender, is primarily affecting women and girls. Sexist acts encompass a broad spectrum of behaviors and expressions that cast one gender as inferior to another, including stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and objectification. As stated in the Council of Europe’s definition of sexism, sexism is any belief, action, and gesture used “with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment”.

On the other hand, misogyny can be perceived as more specific in its hostile form of sexism. As Kendall (2024) notes, misogyny has historically been distinguished from sexism through its association with more overt acts of violence, such as sexual assault or murder. Nonetheless, during the so-called fourth wave of feminism that began in the early 21st century, the lines between misogyny and sexism began to blur. Misogyny became almost interchangeable with sexism and started to be used to indicate biases against women in addition to acts of violence or hatred specifically targeting them (Kendall, 2024). Despite this theoretical shift, this paper chooses to use “sexism” as a broader term to encompass various expressions of gender-based discrimination within the “manosphere”. In the context of this research, the deliberate choice of the term “sexism” over “misogyny” aligns with the perspective expressed by Mills (2008). Sexism, according to Mills’ understanding, is not just an isolated linguistic phenomenon but is intricately connected to larger societal forces and institutional inequalities of power. In *Language*

and Sexism, Mills contends that sexism, in a similar fashion to other discriminatory forms of language like racism, is indicative of broader conflicts over rights; from this perspective, sexism serves as an “index of ongoing conflict between men and women” (2008: 2), reflecting societal power dynamics. Thus, the following section 2.2 will focus exclusively on sexism, as it is explained to encompass a broader range of concepts.

2.2. Sexism in online spaces

The Economist Intelligence Unit’s analysis (2021) reveals that an average of 85% of 4,500 women surveyed across 45 countries have either experienced or witnessed online abuse. The primary tactics identified are misinformation and defamation followed by cyber-harassment, and hate speech, frequently employed to silence women and limit their online presence. Alarming, 50% of women expressed that the internet is an unsafe space for sharing their thoughts, with 9 in 10 women restricting their online activity.

Barker and Jurasz (2019) argue that interactive, user-led platforms should actively promote the Internet as an open, inclusive, and participatory space. Even so, as they contend, recent trends in online abuse and social media misuse suggest that these ideals have been overshadowed by the realities of online interaction. Quoting Mhari Black, a former Scottish Member of Parliament, Barker and Jurasz claim that derogatory online comments, oftentimes dismissed as the actions of a few anonymous individuals, are, in fact, reflective of everyday language. The normalization of unchallenged offensive language creates an environment conducive to a broad spectrum of abuse against women.

According to the “Eurobarometer Media and News Survey” (2022), Reddit, Discord, and Twitch have the highest proportion of male users, with Reddit having a 69% male user base. Reddit as a platform has been linked to negative attitudes towards women. Instances include subreddits like /r/MensRights and

/r/BlackPillScience promoting anti-women ideas. Despite the removal or restriction of extreme subreddits, such as /r/Incels and /r/TheRedPill, Reddit retains a substantial male user presence, indicating the lack of women's engagement in such media. Twitch and Discord, grounded in gaming culture, similarly demonstrate significant gender disparities. That is why, Reddit has been chosen as the object of study as far as sexist rhetoric is concerned.

2.3. Radicalized views, language, and Reddit

As stated by Ferrer et al. (2020), as platforms cater to isolated user communities, websites/forums like Reddit are becoming more intertwined with concerns related to racism, sexism, and various other types of discrimination. In their study using word embedding to distinguish language biases present within Reddit communities, Ferrer et al. emphasize the importance of tracing such bias in interest-based communities on Reddit; /r/The-RedPill, a community notorious for discussing "sexual strategy" for men, is analyzed in order to investigate its dispositions towards gender. Importantly, Ferrer et al. conclude that there are differences found in clustered biases for men and women, with men associated with, among other notable categories, power and organizing and toughness, and biases against women concerning their anatomy and physiology as well as judgment of appearance. Crucially, their study underlines the existence of biased language within Reddit communities seen as "constitutive spaces for contemporary ideological groups and processes" (2020: 1).

Rieger et al. (2021) examine hate speech within alt-right fringe communities on Reddit, 4chan, and 8chan. Analyzing user comments, the research reveals that hate speech is prevalent across all three platforms, with more extreme communities displaying higher levels. Targets include Jews, Black people, and political opponents, with hate speech manifesting in general insults, disinformation, and inhuman ideologies. The findings

underscore the normalization of hate speech within these communities, emphasizing the importance of considering implicit hate speech.

Deligianni and Horne (2023) argue that men's rights activists have established anti-feminist groups with a male-supremacist stance, aiming to challenge and exclude women. In an effort to capture men's rights hate speech, the authors employ topic modeling and sentiment analysis to gain insights into the intricacies of men's rights hate speech basing their analysis upon three Reddit communities - /r/AskMen, /r/TheRedPill, and /r/MensRights; indeed, their findings seem to suggest men's rights groups concentrated more on rejection by women or discrimination against men.

Overall, examining radicalized language on Reddit is crucial as these online platforms are increasingly linked to the prevalence of hate speech and otherwise largely biased language expressions. This study aims to contribute to existing research by employing natural language processing (NLP) techniques to delve into the complexities of the gender divide discourse, particularly within men's rights groups seen as an integral part of the so-called "manosphere" communities further explained in section 2.4.

2.4. Gender (in)equality, gender bias, and men's movement

The Gender Social Norms Index by UNDP (2023) reveals persisting biases by assessing people's perceptions across four crucial dimensions: political, educational, economic, and physical integrity. Covering 85 percent of the world's population, the index discloses that almost 9 out of 10 individuals, irrespective of gender, harbor fundamental biases against women. Even so, a joint study conducted by King's College London's Policy Institute and Global Institute for Women's Leadership (2024) reveals an emerging gender divide in young people's attitudes towards masculinity and women's equality. The survey, encompassing 3,716 participants aged 16 and above, indicates that the

divergence in opinions is most pronounced among the youth, particularly regarding terms like “toxic masculinity”, the challenges faced by men and women today, and the impact of feminism on society. In fact, young men tend to show less support for gender equality actions than their older counterparts, and they express greater concerns about challenges faced by men. Notably, there is a significant gender gap in views on whether it is harder to be a man or a woman today, with young women expressing higher concerns about the challenges faced by women compared to their male counterparts.

Considering the above-mentioned study, understanding the landscape of men’s engagement, particularly in the case of younger men, with gender politics is essential, particularly within the context of men’s rights and the “manosphere” explored in section 2.5. According to Flood (2007), diverse perspectives, ranging from constructive approaches to gender bias to harmful and antifeminist, can be found within the so-called men’s movement that originated in the late 1960s as a response to what was commonly referred to as the “Second Wave Feminism”. As argued by Flood, the “men’s movement” comprises five overlapping strands. The first perspective, men’s liberation, centers on addressing the loneliness and suffering experienced by boys and men through socialization into manhood. The second strand, referred to as anti-sexist, acknowledges men’s pain while placing greater emphasis on male privilege and gender inequalities. Another perspective is coined as spiritual and mythopoetic; from this point of view, masculinity is seen as rooted in unconscious patterns and is aimed at restoring men’s psychospiritual health. Additionally, the Christian/religious strand involves bringing men together through Christianity or other religious beliefs to embrace more “godly” influences, often advocating for a return to traditional gender roles and “dispositions”. Lastly, the men’s rights and fathers’ rights perspective blames women and feminism for perceived harm to men, denies concepts of male power and privilege, and argues that men are now the real victims of social injustice. The last strand of the men’s

movement as defined by Flood, the men's rights and fathers' rights, will be scrutinized for gender-divide language and linguistic biases in the analysis.

2.5. Navigating the manosphere communities

The term manosphere gained prominence in 2009 as a play on the word "blogosphere" and encompasses diverse groups of largely young men united in contending that men are the actual victims who need to actively defend themselves against feminism. Following McCullough's (2023) perspective, men's rights activists express genuine concerns about economic changes affecting traditional jobs, challenges to gender roles due to gender equality progress, and rising rates of men's mental health issues. The manosphere, however, simplifies these complex issues by placing blame on women and feminism, portraying this as an emotional reaction termed "aggrieved entitlement", occurring when individuals in positions of power and privilege perceive advancements in equality and inclusivity as a threat to their status, interpreting it as a personal affront.

In their characterization of the "manosphere" communities, "roughly focused on 'men's issues'" (Horta Ribeiro et al., 2021), Ribeiro et al. claim in the overview of the manosphere that there are the following four groups: Men's Rights Activists (MRA), Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), Pick Up Artists (PUA), and Involuntary Celibates (Incels). While MRAs predominantly focus on societal discrimination, MGTOWs advocate for men to separate themselves from women altogether. PUAs, on the other hand, concentrate on tactics on how to pick up women. Lastly, Incels unite around feelings of rejection and rage towards women due to their "involuntary celibate".

In contrast to the majority of researchers, Copland (2022) argues that /r/MensRights should be excluded from the manosphere communities. Copland contends that men's rights movements historically engage in gender-based political and social activism, addressing issues including domestic violence or child

support and custody battles. Despite this connection being acknowledged in section 2.3, the following research recognizes the difference between activism and the existence of highly negative, opinionated comments, and personal attacks with a “gynocentric bias”, referring to perceived favoritism towards women and focus on women’s interests, undertone within the /r/MensRights community.

Overall, the manosphere reflects diverse ideological strands, originating from critiques of traditional gender roles and evolving into anti-feminist and sexist sentiments expressed through various online communities.

2.6. Natural language processing methods for analyzing gender discourse

Mountford (2018) points to the potentials of natural language processing (NLP) to infer topics, sentiment, and more from naturally produced text by utilizing NLP models in an effort to replicate existing topics and provide insights into The Red Pill’s (TRP) masculinity and other online communities. Mountford further emphasizes the fact that NLP has the ability to investigate specific conceptual framings, such as the significance of historical male leaders, perceptions of feminism, and the role of pick-up artists (PUA) in achieving The Red Pill’s community goals. Through the use of topic modeling, Mountford highlights the portrayal of women as sexual commodities in two distinct manners: overt objectification in “Pickup” language and implicit commodification in “Goals and Growth” discourse. In such discourse, women are depicted as identifying features, such as blonde, and further objectified through terms like “tit” or “dressed”.

In their exploration of “manosphere” communities spanning seven Reddit communities, Farrell et al. (2019) point to the shift in men’s rights activism moving towards more explicit and radicalized language in the context of openly sexist content. The study integrates feminist and social theories with computational

approaches to examine the manosphere, suggesting lexicons of hate terms present in such communities. It examines a substantial dataset comprising 6 million posts from 300,000 discussions, representing one of the most extensive investigations in this field. Utilizing natural language processing methodologies, it aims to detect and classify misogynistic expressions. While Farrell et al. explore misogyny present within seven “manosphere” communities including Men Going Their Own Way, /r/MensRights is not explored within their observational analysis.

Through machine learning text classifiers, keyword frequencies, and qualitative methods, LaViolette and Hogan (2019) differentiate two subreddits, /r/MensRights and /r/MensLib, and interpret their ideological differences. In their study, LaViolette and Hagan state that while /r/MensLib tends to view masculinity as descriptive and regards women as equals, /r/MensRights regards being male as an intrinsic characteristic, sees men as victims of discrimination, and perceives women as sources of personalized grievances. The distinctiveness of these communities is not only evident in their word choices but also crucially in the combinations of words, their co-occurrence, and their appeal to readers as evidenced by positive voting signals.

Crucially, while majority of studies, similarly to this study, focus upon “manosphere” and male-centric, extremist communists in their analysis, Balci et al. (2023) diverge by applying NLP methods, including clustering, in order to investigate the “manosphere counterparts” (2023: 9) of online women's ideological spaces (OWIS). In their study, Balci et al. delve into OWIS and identify three primary clusters delineating distinct community differences, including Mainstream Feminism, Gender-Critical Feminism (GCF), and Manosphere Analogs. GCF, characterized by its radical stance viewing individuals with male anatomy as oppressors, contrasts with Mainstream Feminism, which adopts a more liberal approach and appeals to a wider audience. The Manosphere Analogs, on the other hand, encompass Female Dating Strategy (FDS), Femcels, Red Pill Women

(RPW), and Women Going Their Own Way (WGTOW), each representing counterparts to various facets of the “manosphere”, with users “not believing in gender equality, [...] discussing house-wife duties, or supporting their alpha men” (2023: 2).

As noted by Aiston (2023), numerous researchers have explored the manosphere and communities alike using computational or quantitative techniques like natural language processing or topic modeling including researchers like Mountford (2018) and LaViolette and Hagan (2019). Aiston highlights the fact that these methods have played a significant role in enhancing our comprehension of hate speech in the manosphere by enabling the automated detection or identification of misogynistic language within these communities.

Overall, the studies conducted by above-mentioned researchers demonstrate the successful application of NLP methods to investigate gender bias within online communities. Building upon these findings, this study aims to contribute to the discourse by employing a different methodological approach, focusing on n-grams analysis rather than topic modeling or clustering. Additionally, the study aims to narrow its focus to a specific community as opposed to conducting a comparative analysis of multiple subreddits. Utilizing Hugging Face Transformers, a Twitter-roBERTa-base Sentiment Analysis model¹, which is a RoBERTa-base model trained on approximately 124 million tweets from 2018 to 2021, and ultimately fine-tuned for the task of sentiment analysis, was used to filter relevant texts from /r/MensRights. Twitter-roBERTa-base Sentiment Analysis model was chosen for this task due to its proven effectiveness in capturing sentiment nuances present in social media text, which aligns with the informal and conversational nature of Reddit comments.

¹ Hugging Face. Twitter-roBERTa-base Sentiment Analysis model. <https://huggingface.co/cardiffnlp/twitter-roberta-base-sentiment-latest>.

3. Methodology

In this section, we outline the methodological approach adopted to analyze discourse within /r/MensRights, encompassing the process of data collection, selection criteria, language bias, and analysis. Specifically, this study employs n-gram analysis to discern prevalent patterns and themes in the subreddit's discussions. Additionally, the employment of Transformers in sentiment analysis to identify and select relevant textual content from Reddit is further explained.

3.1. Data collection

In order to investigate and analyze the dynamics of a specific Reddit community, this section aims to outline the methodology employed for data collection. Before looking into the data preparation process, it is crucial to explain the term “subreddit”. A subreddit is an online discussion forum centered around a specific topic, allowing users to share links, create self-posts, and engage in discussions. The subreddit of interest in the following analysis has been identified based on its notoriety for contentious discussions or otherwise problematic aspects further investigated in section 3.1.2.

3.1.1. Reddit API for text data extraction

To compile the necessary textual data for analysis, the Reddit API (Application Programming Interface), utilizing the Python Reddit API Wrapper (PRAW), was employed; Reddit API facilitates the extraction of content including submitted posts and comments from the Reddit platform. Before initiating data retrieval, authorization credentials were obtained - this involves obtaining client IDs, client secrets, and a user agent (a unique identifier), ensuring compliance with Reddit's API usage policies. After setting up the credentials, PRAW was configured in order to “target” a specific community (subreddit) as one of

the parameters. Additionally, all comments included in the analysis were posted within the timespan ranging from 2015 to 2023, ensuring a representation of the community's discourse over an extended time period.

3.1.2. Selection criteria for the target community

The decision to focus on /r/MensRights, as a self-proclaimed men's rights advocacy community, is motivated by the fact that although the discourse is centered around the idea of men experiencing discrimination, a significant portion of discussions revolve around portraying women as hostile and implying that men's rights are somehow jeopardized by the existence of women's rights. Following Rafail and Freitas' (2019) examination of /r/MensRights, a pivotal community within the "manosphere", the following analysis takes a distinct approach grounded in natural language processing (NLP) techniques based on recent textual data, allowing this study to contribute insights into the evolving landscape of online men's rights activism and their use of language.

3.1.3. Identifying relevant texts

PRAW functionalities were employed to filter submissions based on specific keywords found in submission titles, for instance, "You can never appease feminists". The selection of keywords was curated in an effort to consider terms associated with named groups, notably "women", "females", "feminists", and "feminazis". The choice of these specific keywords allows for an examination of how different groups and ideologies are represented and discussed within online platforms. Additionally, "feminism" was used as a keyword indicating attitudes present towards the movement. This filtering, including both neutral and more ideological terms, was designed to refine the data collection process, with a specific emphasis on capturing content directly linked to the discourse surrounding man vs. woman

dynamics. By focusing on these keywords, a more targeted analysis of language patterns within one of the “manosphere” communities was ensured.

3.2. Data preparation

After creating a search using PRAW for keywords specified in Section 3.1.3, a combined total of 49,193 submissions and comments were downloaded. In order to enhance the overall quality of the dataset, duplicate entries were removed. Relevant metadata associated with submissions and comments found under these submissions in a “thread”, including timestamps and submission details, were integrated to augment the dataset’s contextual richness. Importantly, user information, including usernames, was anonymized to uphold user privacy. Focusing on the inclusion of both submissions and their associated comments in the textual content, these preparatory steps lay the groundwork for a contextually informed analysis of the selected online community, /r/MensRights.

3.2.1. Sentiment analysis using Hugging Face Transformers

Considering the volume of textual data being approximately 50k texts, a decision was made to minimize the datasets to exclusively investigate content with a heightened negative sentiment, as identified through the sentiment analysis process. This reduction in dataset size aims to manage computational load while maintaining a focus on the significant features of interest. In order to do so, sentiment analysis through Python was leveraged while integrating the capabilities of Hugging Face Transformers. Sentiment analysis, a critical component of natural language processing (NLP), involves computationally determining the emotional tone of a piece of text. In the context of the following study, it helps identify and categorize the sentiment expressed in textual content present on the /r/MensRights

Reddit community. Employing Hugging Face Transformers, a natural language processing (NLP) library, a sentiment analysis framework was implemented in Python to discern the sentiment present in each text. The Transformers library, developed by Hugging Face, provides access to a variety of state-of-the-art models for tasks such as sentiment analysis. The sentiment score computation involved analyzing the sentiment of individual sentences and then averaging these scores to obtain an overall sentiment score for each comment. The threshold of negative scores higher than 0.5 was chosen for two primary reasons. Firstly, this threshold helps to focus on comments with a predominantly negative sentiment, which are more likely to contain biased or discriminatory language. By setting this threshold, we aim to ensure that the comments selected for analysis are those that potentially contribute to or reflect gender bias within the subreddit. Additionally, using a threshold of 0.5 allows for a clear classification of comments as either positive or negative, simplifying the sentiment analysis process.

3.2.2. Addressing language bias

Some concerns regarding bias may arise when considering the data used in this study. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the examination of biased expressions is central to the research objectives. Despite acknowledging the potential bias, it is important to recognize that this bias is the central focus of the analysis, and it facilitates a better understanding of attitudes and perspectives within the online community. Furthermore, as explained in a previous subsection, comments with negative scores higher than 0.5 were specifically chosen to ensure the inclusion of expressions indicative of biased attitudes and viewpoints. Sexist rhetoric, being inherently biased, is a crucial aspect of the study's focus. By examining these expressions in particular, manifestations of gender bias within the subreddit are observed.

3.3. N-gram analysis

N-gram analysis is seen as a crucial tool aimed at investigating linguistic patterns and structures within the opinionated discourse of /r/MensRights. This approach involves the extraction and examination of n-grams, where ‘n’ represents the number of consecutive words in a sequence. The Python script utilized for this analysis employs the SpaCy library² for natural language processing.

3.3.1. Data preprocessing

The raw textual data obtained from Reddit using their API and PRAW functionalities is initially preprocessed to enhance the quality of the subsequent analysis. First, texts are tokenized, broken down into units called tokens (i.e., words), by employing the SpaCy English language model. Then, all tokens are converted to lowercase to ensure consistency in analysis. Following this process, common English stop words are eliminated from the tokenized text to focus on meaningful content. Additionally, in order to handle potential errors during processing larger texts, the text is ultimately divided into more manageable chunks.

The decision to utilize SpaCy for tokenization for n-grams instead of NLTK or Gensim was primarily based on several factors. Firstly, SpaCy is known for its speed and efficiency in processing large volumes of text data. Compared to NLTK and Gensim, SpaCy’s tokenization pipeline is optimized for performance (Bobriakov, 2018), making it well-suited for handling the extensive datasets typically encountered in Reddit analysis. What is more, SpaCy’s pre-trained models provide accurate tokenization, capturing the nuances of informal and diverse language commonly found on platforms like Reddit. While NLTK and Gensim also offer tokenization functionality, SpaCy’s models are

² spaCy. <https://spacy.io>.

specifically trained on social media text, resulting in superior accuracy for this type of data.

.3.2. Extracting n-grams and top n-grams

N-grams are extracted from the preprocessed text using a Python script utilizing the SpaCy library. Specifically, the script extracts two-grams (bigrams), three-grams (trigrams), and four-grams from the dataset. While bigrams investigate sequential pairs of words, trigrams encompass three consecutive words. As far as fourgrams are concerned, a sequence of four adjacent words is explored. Each n-gram list is, subsequently, saved to a separate tsv file. The most frequent n-grams are determined by counting their occurrences in the preprocessed text by using the *most_common* method available in the Counter class. The top 300 n-grams for each category (bigrams, trigrams, and fourgrams) are selected for further interpretation. The main idea behind the use of n-gram analysis in this methodology is to enable the identification and exploration of recurring phrases, expressions, and structures within the chosen Reddit community. In order to visualize the most common n-grams more clearly, the Python script selects the top 30 records, employing the pandas, seaborn, and matplotlib libraries to create a bar plot for visual representation. The resulting plot showcases the frequency distribution of these n-grams, with the x-axis representing the count and the y-axis displaying the respective n-grams as seen in section 4. Crucially, contexts for n-gram patterns will be added to an Appendix to ensure transparency.

4. Interpretation of significant n-grams in the context of gender-biased language on /r/MensRights

This section examines the frequency and types of gender-biased language observed within the discussions on the /r/MensRights subreddit by looking into prevalent attitudes and discourse surrounding gender issues. Significant n-grams extracted from the

dataset are analyzed and interpreted to uncover key themes and patterns in the language on /r/MensRights, shedding light on the implications conveyed through specific word combinations.

4.1. Bigram patterns

Upon closely examining the prominent bigrams within the men's rights movement as presented in Figure 1, a range of key phrases emerges, providing valuable insights into the prevalent concerns and issues in men's rights discourse. The recurrent presence of bigrams like "men women", "men rights", "child support", "domestic abuse", "male victims", and "men issues" reveals an interaction of themes central to the core of the men's rights community, albeit within the context of a perceived fixation on women and feminism as the purported causes of men's personal and social challenges.

The bigram "men women" suggests a deliberate exploration of gender dynamics, though it may lean towards scrutinizing the interactions between men and women with a focus on potential issues faced by men. The sequence of "men rights" serves as a central theme, emphasizing the community's advocacy for men's rights, often juxtaposed against perceived challenges posed by feminist ideologies.

The prominence of "child support" delves into discussions around custody battles and financial burdens, contextualized within the narrative of men's rights. The bigram "domestic abuse" directs attention to an issue frequently raised within the men's rights movement – the acknowledgment of male victims of domestic violence. Similarly, the presence of "toxic masculinity" might suggest the men's rights discourse critically assesses the current state of conversations around masculinity and its impact on men. However, when these sequences are examined in context, examples where the concept of "toxic masculinity" is claimed to be purported by women are found. The bigram "men issues", on the other hand, encapsulates a broad spectrum of concerns, spanning discussions on mental health, stereotypes,

and societal expectations that impact the experiences of men in contemporary society. While the discussions found in /r/MensRights community address these issues to some degree, it is crucial to acknowledge the underlying discourse that tends to fixate on women and feminism as perceived sources of men's personal and social problems.

Examining the prevalent bigrams in the discourse surrounding the men's rights community reveals a focus on issues that, while addressing legitimate concerns as mentioned, also reflect the men's rights community's contentious reputation. The recurrence of bigrams such as "male victims", "hate women", and "feminist movement" displays a perceived fixation on women and feminism as the sources of men's personal and social challenges. The bigram "male victims" emphasizes a crucial aspect of the previously explained men's rights movement, advocating for male victims of societal issues including domestic violence. However, the proximity of this term within the discourse suggests a potential criticism of the movement's tendency to frame these issues primarily in opposition to perceived feminist narratives. The bigram "hate women" encapsulates a concern often raised by critics, pointing to instances within the men's rights movement where rhetoric may be perceived as containing hostility towards women. Furthermore, the inclusion of "feminist movement" as one of the top bigrams underscores the perceived adversarial stance between the men's rights advocates and feminism. This recurrent theme suggests a preoccupation with positioning the movement in opposition to feminist ideals.

In summary, while the men's rights movement addresses valid concerns, the frequent appearance of bigrams associated with animosity, such as "hate women" and a contentious relationship with the "feminist movement" contributes to the movement's image as suggested by Flood (2007), in which the blame is put on women and feminism for perceived harm to contemporary men.

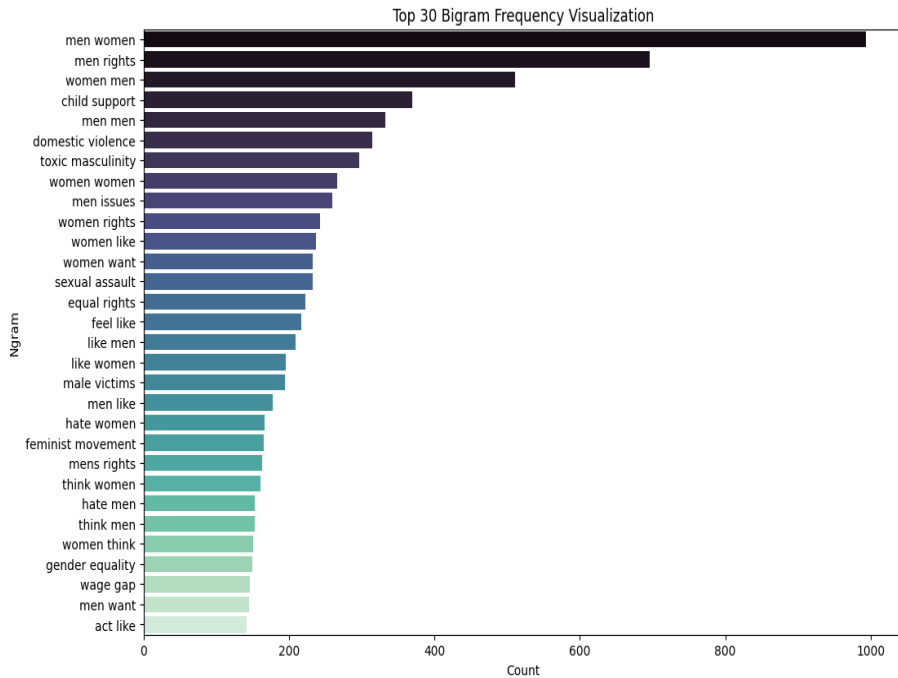


Figure 1

Most common 30 bigram language patterns based on /r/MensRights

4.2. Trigram patterns

In comparison to previously identified and analyzed bigrams, the exploration of trigrams in the /r/MensRights community as seen in Figure 2 reveals an evolution of discourse themes. These trigrams provide a deeper understanding of the perspectives and potential tensions within the community, offering a view of the gender divide and language employed.

Firstly, the presence of trigrams such as “action performed automatically” or “automatically contact moderators” underscores the issue of toxicity within the community. The automated moderation actions as well as the necessity to contact moderators indicate a need for content control, highlighting the potential for inflammatory language or violations of community

guidelines. This inflammatory language can be potentially found within the following sequence, “men hate women”, as a concerning sentiment within the community suggesting perceived, deep-seated animosity between genders. In the ongoing exploration of the /r/MensRights community, men’s rights as one of the stances within the men’s movement was defined in research as anti-feminist, highlighting the perception of animosity between men and women.

Similarly to the bigram analysis, the trigram examination showcases concerns within the /r/MensRights community related to issues impacting men. Discussions encompass topics such as paying child support, victims of domestic violence, the gender pay gap, and addressing the broader movement of men’s rights. This emphasis highlighted by the employment of the term “movement”, underscores a collective awareness among members, signifying a perception of themselves as a more organized group. Additionally, there is an instance of the concept of “patriarchy” used next to the discussion of “toxic masculinity”. This trigram might indicate an awareness and discussion within the community about how these elements may impact men and contribute to the broader discourse on men's rights.

Even so, in the most common trigrams found, we can see a heightened presence of language used to discredit feminist narratives. For instance, “debunked feminist backtracking” implies that there has been an effort to challenge or disprove aspects of feminist discourse. In a similar fashion, “feminist backtracking lies” suggests a critical and confrontational stance towards feminism. The term “backtracking” implies a perceived inconsistency in feminist arguments, intensified by the accusation of lying. The anti-feminist sentiment within the men’s rights community may be fueled by a belief that feminist perspectives are intentionally deceptive. This can be further investigated in the context that “everybody” is able to debunk feminist statements, as present in the “everybody debunked feminist” trigram. Such a sequence might imply a shared sentiment within

the community that feminist viewpoints have been widely discredited and/or disproven.

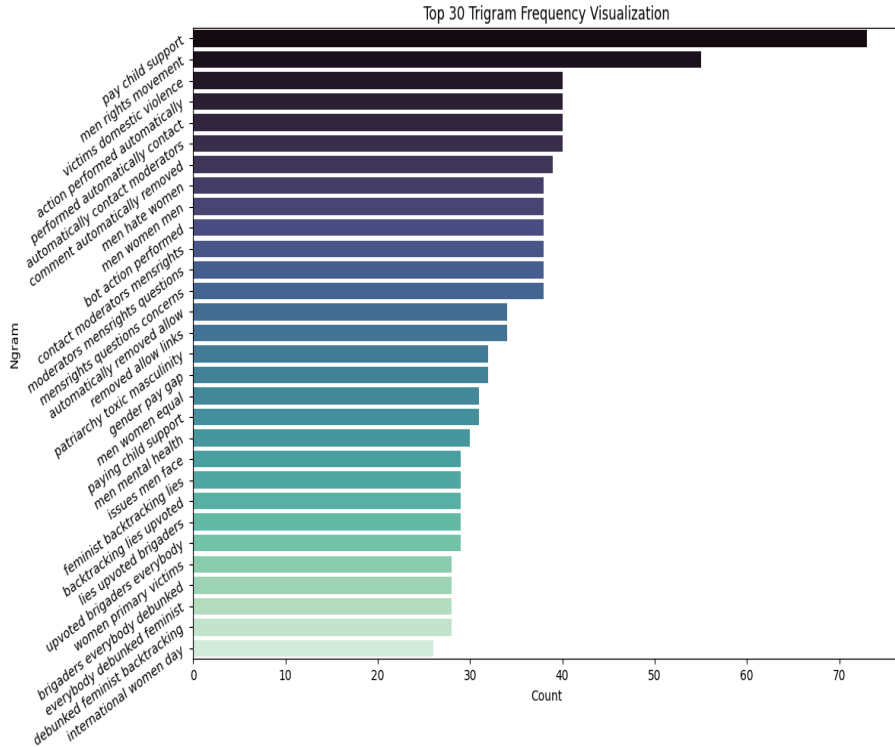


Figure 2

Most common 30 of trigram language patterns based on /r/MensRights

4.3. Fourgram patterns

As the last step of the n-gram exploration, the following analysis is extended to fourgrams. This method allows us to essentially build upon trigram insights, providing a more detailed perspective on the evolving discourse. By introducing an extra element, shifts and patterns in discussions within the men's rights community are investigated. Crucially, analyzing fourgrams in Figure 3, we can now see the lack of references to issues that

men face, rather a stronger focus on feminists' responsibility and influence of public perceptions and underlying societal structures in this context.

Similarly to what has been observed in trigrams, there is a clear need for content moderation, with examples such as "action performed automatically contact". Interestingly, the analysis "enriched" by an additional element (i.e., word) reveals a notable focus on gender dynamics but used in the context of ideological and rhetorical "war" as seen in the fourgram "women primary victims war". This particular combination implies a heightened awareness of gender conflicts, claiming that women tend to be portrayed as victims in a metaphorical "war" between genders. Additionally, there is an absence of discussions on practical issues, specifically the overlooked "men's issue" of paying child support as previously explored both in bigrams and trigrams.

Crucially, the community's discourse extends to fourgrams related to feminism and academic theory, exposing a concern about the perceived influence of these ideologies on policies and laws. Phrases such as "feminists actually responsible changing" and "changing laws writing academic" suggest a belief that academic discourse, particularly feminist, has a direct impact on shaping legislation. Moreover, such phrases underscore the perceived impact of feminists' ideological rhetoric on contemporary society as seen by men's rights members. Once the context of such sequences is looked into, we can see comparisons being made between feminist theory and Marxism. Moreover, the inclusion of "debunked feminist backtracking lies" is clearly critical and dismissive of feminist perspectives. It reflects a perspective within the community that actively challenges and opposes what is perceived as misleading information or changes in stance by feminists.

In summary, the /r/MensRights community appears engrossed in discussions around gender conflicts and the impact of feminism on policies and laws. While the absence of practical issues discussed by the men's movement like child support is

clearly visible, the community’s narrative implies skepticism toward feminist ideals and an underlying fear of women’s purported influence on the very fabric of societal structures.

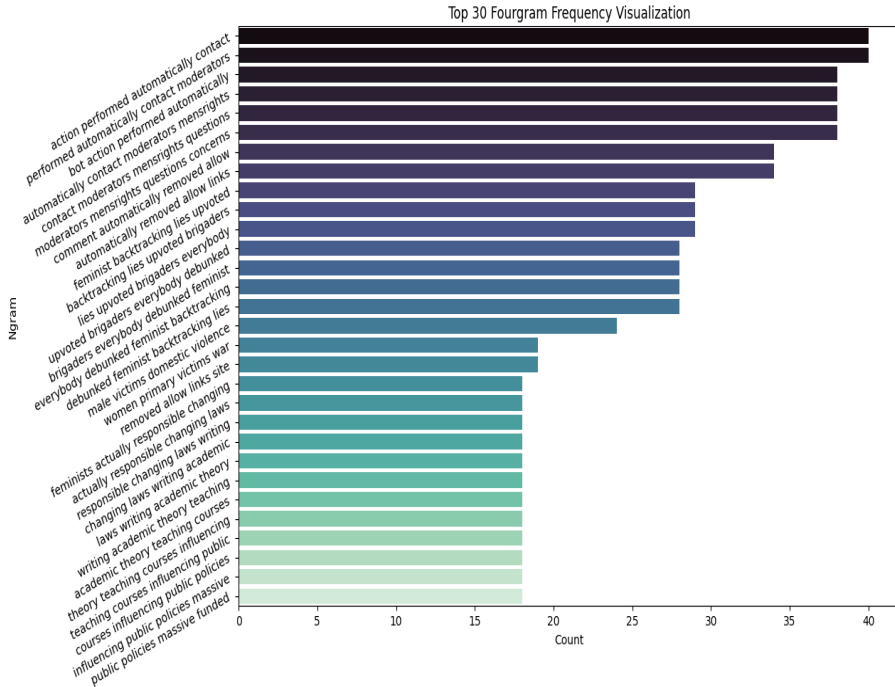


Figure 3
Most common 30 fourgram language patterns based on /r/MensRights

5. Conclusions

To sum up, while the /r/MensRights community seemingly engages in discussions addressing valid concerns related to men’s issues, a closer examination reveals a notable shift towards critiquing and assigning blame to women for perceived harm observed with each n-element added. This shift is evident in the language used, particularly in trigrams and fourgrams, where the discourse reflects broader societal conflicts, aligning with

Mills' (2008) argument that sexism serves as an indicator of the continuing conflict between men and women. The n-gram analysis highlights a narrative that goes beyond addressing men's issues to actively challenging feminist ideologies, contributing to the larger discourse on power dynamics and the so-called gender divide as perceived by a self-proclaimed men's rights activism community.

The study emphasizes the importance of scrutinizing radicalized language on online platforms like Reddit, as they are increasingly linked to the proliferation of biased expressions and forms of hate speech. The manosphere, with its ideological strands, originates from critiques of traditional gender roles but evolves into anti-feminist and sexist sentiments across various online communities. Recognizing these ideological shifts is crucial for understanding the dynamics within such spaces, not only in the context of the scrutinized community, /r/Mens-Rights, but other online communities that seem to reinforce more right-leaning ideologies.

In conclusion, the employment of n-grams as a method in natural language processing served to corroborate, through a different methodological approach, the assertions posited by prior researchers concerning the impact of an online manosphere community on framing gender divide and gender bias narratives. For future research, employing more advanced methods such as Transformer word embeddings for the categorization of gender-divide and gender-biased language within "manosphere" communities can enhance existing research. This approach would enable a more nuanced exploration of the evolving language patterns and ideologies and provide insights into the complexities of online discourse surrounding gender issues.

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Appendix

N-gram	Context (comment content)
men rights	[...] Personally, I went through foster care. The foster mothers were worse to me than the foster fathers. The foster sisters were worse to me than the foster brothers. My biological mother was the reason for the foster care, and my biological brother was the one who protected me throughout foster care. So I'm 'for' Men's Rights because I understand just how much men do. I've seen the honor, the care, the strength. Men are beautiful, and deserve respect.
men women	A important argument is also it's logical colloary; if we live in a patriarchy where men are privileged, then men women would be over represented in the worst of people in society. It's reasonable to say the worst of in society is the homeless, and as such they represent who are least privileged in society. As such if men are privileged then most homeless must be women, but as it turns out men are homeless to a vastly greater degree than women. Ergo, women are privileged and we live in a matriarchy.
toxic masculinity	These feminist can't make the connections inside their head (cognative disnoiances). They want men that are in charge of their lives, work out and be leaders. Yet, for example, having their boyfriend and husband go to the gym instead of spending time with them is

	considered "Toxic Masculinity"... because according to these feminist working out is enforcing negative body stereotypes [...]
men issues	[..] Great, now invest on the men issues, most of us has more traumas and less mental health, just look at our suicide rate; maybe if we at least could receive some help with that, men could be more aware of their beloved ones and try to don't mess their lives by being bad people. (yes our mental health is an issue, the "i didn't have received a hug on decades" is not a meme.) [...]
hate women	Misogynism implies I hate women. I do not. I only dislike non reasonable/friendly individuals such as radical feminists. Tell me, if this patriarchy truly exists then how come we get none of the benefits? We live shorter, die in war more, die in workplace accidents more, pay the most taxes
male victims	[...] The problem is that feminists, in the name of advocating for women, have opposed gender neutral DV/rape laws and equal custody rights both parents. Feminists also engage in extra circular activities like constantly minimising, denying and erasing male victims.
feminist movement	Feminist movement seems to have undergone a internal coup. It appears to be Marxists in charge of the feminist movement.
men hate women	MRA call for or demand free stuff for men, or a bias towards men, yet we see female chauvinists demand free stuff for women constantly as well as a hatred and lack of empathy for men. My conclusion with this as well as observation on posts on medium, is that (feminist) women hate men a whole lot more than men hate women.
patriarchy toxic masculinity	[...] Masculinity and gender is not by choice..even if toxic masculinity refers to legitimate problems, it is an unacceptable usage of the word. This subreddit points out the issues by "complaining", but what you don't realize is that we can't have activism and support for something unless it first is recognized as a problem.

	That is why we “complain”, we raise awareness for men’s issues and the lack of support for these problems.
debunked feminist backtracking lies	Another debunked feminist backtracking on lies upvoted by brigaders. Nothing to see here move along everybody.
action performed automatically contact	Let's not spend too much time on what's toxic. Tell us what you like about men and masculinity below this comment. *I am a bot, and this action was performed automatically. Please [contact the moderators of this subreddit]
women primary victims war	Women naturally form cartels and gain monopolistic power over society for their own benefit, then use that influence to dictate how things are done. We can demonstrate this is how it works in a lab. Your argument is cut from the same cloth as Hillary Clinton's "women are the primary victims of war, they lose their husbands, their fathers, and their brothers..." It's disgraceful. >As for men constantly being murdered... well, newsflash number two my friend, it is men who are doing the murdering. Not women. Desperate and oppressed people commit more violent crimes. This is an extremely strong statistical relationship. Just look at the amount of homeless men vs women, it's 3x the rate. There's far more desperate men than women. We can be very certain if men were as privileged as women this would be less of a problem. [...] You come off as extremely uneducated. You don't care about reality or objectivity. You just innately hate men.
changing laws writing academic	Feminism exists because there were social problems that affected women that were created by men. This is an outrageous lie. Feminism has its roots in classic Marxism. The feminists of yore were not stupid nor uneducated, and they didn't want "equality or rights." What they wanted, was POWER. Marxist theory is a blueprint for changing the balance of power in a society. By owning the means of production, you can shift societal power. The only problem is that for any

	radical or revolutionary change, you need a symbolic enemy that can epitomize your struggle. What better enemy than men?
changing laws writing academic	Sorry, but it's not just some loud people. Feminism, at its very core, assumes that we live in sexist patriarchy where men benefit at the expense of women. In a world where men make up the vast majority of the homeless, the vast majority of suicide victims, a world in which men are imprisoned at a much greater rate (even for the same crime), get murdered more, as boys get worse grades for the same work as girls, a world where women make 80 percent of consumer spending decisions for working fewer hours in safer jobs, in that world we have feminists who tell us we live in sexist patriarchy. This is not only false but a projection. Feminism has a long history of being anti-egalitarian and spreading false propaganda about the supposed oppression of women. It has a strong lobby in academia, the news, governments, etc., and is even represented by the likes of the UN.
feminist actually responsible changing	Mainstream modern feminists continue to push these false narratives that domestic violence is a women's issue and that it's Men that are the abusers. Katherine Spillar, director of Majority Feminist Foundation and executive editor for Ms Magazine, said in her interview for the red pill movie that... > "The whole issue of domestic violence-- that's just another word really. It's a clean up word for wife beating.. because that's what it really is. > Its not girls that are beating up on boys, it's boys that are beating up on girls." Yeah... this is coming from someone with a lot of power and influence in the feminist movement and you could argue that she is a big spokesperson for the movement.

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