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"Because I Shave My Armpits...": A Content Analysis of #WomenAgainstFeminism on Twitter

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“BECAUSE I SHAVE MY ARMPITS...”: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF
#WOMENAGAINSTFEMINISM ON TWITTER

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Sociology
in the College of Sciences
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at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

Because of the speed and convenience of Twitter, it has become one of the most widely utilized platforms for breaking news and is often used to raise awareness of current social issues, political happenings, and social injustices. As more women use Twitter and other social media to embrace the feminist label online, an array of criticism has come to surface. A new movement, #WomenAgainstFeminism, has become popular with Twitter users who reject feminism ideals and the feminism label.

Research has been done examining the presence of online feminism, “hashtag feminism,” and online activism in general. Currently, there is no research analyzing the online reaction to feminism, #WomenAgainstFeminism. The purpose of this study is to analyze tweets containing #WomenAgainstFeminism to identify the salient reasons for rejecting feminism, stereotypes associated with feminism, and characteristics associated with feminists. This study broadens the current literature that analyzes attitudes towards feminism, stereotypes of feminists, and feminist identification. This study also adds to the growing body of literature that appreciates the impact Twitter and other social media networks have on members of society and social movements. This study differs from previous research because it focuses on the common stereotypes and characteristics associated with feminism that are prevalent in a social media campaign created to refute feminism.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

According to Twitter.com (2014), a “tweet” is an expression of a moment or an idea. A tweet can contain text, photos, and hyperlinks. Hashtags are used to assign a topic to a tweet so that readers can conveniently jump to a topic of interest. Hashtags also allow users to organize and categorize their own tweets. Today, Twitter.com (2014) maintains approximately 271 million monthly active users and about 500 million tweets are posted per day.

Because of the speed and convenience of Twitter, it has become one of the most widely utilized platforms for breaking news and is often used to raise awareness of current social issues, political happenings, and social injustices. President Barack Obama holds one of the most widely circulated tweets to date with his 2012 election victory tweet that stated simply, “Four more years”. More recently, millions of Twitter users raised awareness of women’s issues, sexism, and violence against women with the hashtag #YesAllWomen. The #YesAllWomen campaign successfully raised awareness of everyday sexism that women experience and greatly strengthened the online presence of feminism. As more women embraced the feminist label online, an array of criticism came to surface. A new hashtag, #WomenAgainstFeminism, became popular with Twitter users who reject feminism ideals and the feminist label. Many tweets listed under #WomenAgainstFeminism consist of text and images depicting negative stereotypes of feminists centered on feminists’ lack of beauty and hatred of men and expressing particular political affiliation, religious views and levels of intelligence or independence (i.e. “I am not a Feminist because I have a brain”). Not surprisingly, Twitter users that embrace the Feminist label began tweeting pro-feminist text and images using the same #WomenAgainstFeminism hashtag.

This has resulted in a sort of conversation between those who truly reject feminist ideals and those who are using the platform to dispute the original claims.

Research has been done examining the presence of online feminism, “hashtag feminism”, and online activism in general. Currently, there is no research analyzing the online reaction to feminism, #WomenAgainstFeminism. The current study analyzed tweets from specific time frames categorized under the hashtag #WomenAgainstFeminism through quantitative and qualitative content analysis. I specifically examined the negative stereotypes of feminists, political references, and common reasons for the rejection of the Feminist label portrayed in tweets categorized under #WomenAgainstFeminism. I also analyzed the use of #WomenAgainstFeminism by feminists to refute criticism of feminist values, and the occurrence of Twitter users who advocate feminist values but reject the label of feminist.

As Twitter continues to grow in the number of active users and its presence in popular culture, it serves as an important source of data for researchers. This study adds to a growing body of literature that appreciates the impact Twitter and other social media networks have on members of society and social movements. This study also adds to the literature that concentrates on attitudes toward feminism, stereotypes of feminists, and feminist identity.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes Toward Feminism

There is an abundance of research measuring attitudes towards feminism, common stereotypes of feminists, and other factors that may affect an individual's decision to identify as a feminist. Fitzpatrick Bettencourt, Vacha-Haase, and Byrne (2011) compared younger and older adult population's attitudes toward feminism. Two hundred and forty five undergraduate college students were chosen to participate in the study because they were linked to older relatives who were also asked to participate. The participants were given a questionnaire packet to measure demographics, religiosity, political orientation, and attitudes towards feminism. The results of this study found that younger women, with a more liberal political orientation and lower levels of religiosity are most likely to have favorable attitudes towards feminism.

A two-part study by Twenge and Zucker (1999) sought to examine stereotypes and evaluations of feminists. In study 1, 210 undergraduate students completed semantic-differential items in response to the question "What is a feminist?" A second and separate sample was asked the question "What is a typical/average woman?" The participants of study 1 also completed a measure of attitudes toward women's rights, the feminist movement, and gender stereotyping. The results of study 1 reveal that feminists are seen as assertive and career orientated. Other salient characteristics include serious, intelligent, strong, and aggressive. Some negative characteristics were stubborn, angry, tense and egotistical. Participants also associated feminists with being liberal and left leaning, politically. Feminists were also sometimes described as radical and anti-male. The sexual orientation of was seen as neutral, though participants did believe that feminists were more likely to be single than married. The findings also showed a

difference in characteristic assumptions of the “typical woman” compared to a feminist. Study 2 measured 135 undergraduate students’ evaluations and stereotypes of female and male feminists. Each participant in study 2 read one of two statements: “Michelle calls herself a feminist”, or “Michael calls himself a feminist”. The participants were then instructed to write a story on Michael or Michelle’s life; depending on which sentence they received. Participants in study 2 also completed a feminist identification measure. The results of study 2 found that 60.7% of the participants did not identify as feminists, 14.8% were not sure, and only 24.5% identified as a feminist. However, about 50.4% of the participant’s responses to the Michael or Michelle sentences were positive and about 35.7% were negative. 85.3% described them as having liberal political beliefs, and 45% described them as heterosexual. Study 1 and study 2 both suggested that the most common stereotypes of feminists are being assertive and career orientated, and having liberal political beliefs. Twenge and Zucker (1999) also argue that feminists are seen as less positive and more likely to be homosexual than the average woman, and are evaluated more negatively than the general woman.

Duncan (2010) compared two generations of women to measure differences in women’s feminist beliefs and activity, definitions of feminism, and associations with the feminist label. Duncan (2010) used data from a survey completed by 667 women in 1992. In one aspect of this study, the respondents answered two open-ended questions that asked how they define feminism and what comes to mind when they think of a feminist. The responses were then coded into 7 categories for definitions of feminism and 7 associations with the feminist label. The categories of definitions of feminism were: equal rights (68%), cultural feminism (20%), self-determination (17%), feminist lens (11%), improving women’s position (7%), gender socialization (6%), and

negative associations (4%). Focusing on the negative associations category, a respondent's answer stated that they refuse to be labeled as a feminist as it is currently perceived, which implies that they recognize a negative connotation associated with the term feminist. The categories of associations with the feminist label were: outspoken/independent, equal rights, organized/committed, general positive characteristics, specific women role models, intelligent, and general negative characteristics. The examples of the negative characteristics are negative stereotypes of feminists such as being anti-male, dogmatic, and bitter. The negative stereotypes also included sexual identity references, and described feminists as bitter lesbians, which is concurrent with the findings of Aronson (2003). The study found no significant generational differences in definitions of feminism and feminist attitudes, but it does provide common themes in defining feminism and attitudes towards feminists that are consistent with other literature.

A study by Swirsky and Angelone (2014) sought to assess women's views on feminism and identifying as a feminist. 494 women living in the United States completed an online survey that consisted of six demographic questions and three open-ended questions. The open-ended questions asked:

- 1) Do you identify as a feminist? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 2) What does your feminism or lack of feminism mean to you? Are you still in the process of figuring it out? What has the journey been like for you?
- 3) What experiences led you to your decision?

Of the women who completed the survey, 20% reported that they did not identify as a feminist. Swirsky and Angelone (2014) categorized the salient reasons for not identifying as feminists into three broad categories: a negative stereotype of feminism, feminism is unnecessary, and other. The three broad categories were then broken down into nine smaller themes:

- 1) Feminism equals extremism
- 2) Feminism is destroying society
- 3) Men and women are just different
- 4) Feminists advocate female supremacy, not gender equality
- 5) Feminism is incongruous with my moral or religious beliefs
- 6) I don't need feminism
- 7) Equality has been achieved
- 8) Feminism means activism
- 9) I'm not sure what it is
- 10) No reason given

Approximately 45% of the respondents fell into the first category and revealed that the negative stereotypes of feminism in society are the reason that they do not identify as a feminist. About 21% of the respondent's beliefs coincide with the negative stereotypes of feminists. An alarming 30% of the respondents fell into the second category, with 23% under the theme representing belief that feminism is irrelevant and unneeded. About 7% of the respondents reported that they believe that social gender equality has already been achieved. About 23.7% of the responses fell under the third category, other, which revealed that about 6% of the women who do not identify as a feminist claim that they do not have enough knowledge about feminism. The findings of this study suggest that negative stereotypes of feminism and an overall misunderstanding of what it means to be a feminist are the main reasons women reject the feminist label.

Aronson (2003) also found that negative stereotypes of feminists and uncertainty of what it means to be a feminist to be reasons that women are reluctant to identify as feminists. Aronson (2003) conducted face to face interviews with 42 women to measure attitudes toward feminism and the effects of race, class, and life experiences on these attitudes. The study found that almost all of the interviewees were supportive of feminist values, but approximately half were reluctant to identify explicitly as a feminist. Eleven out of the 42 interviewees were uncertain about their stance on feminism, and 8 refused to identify as a feminist. Thirteen out of 42 of the interviewees were categorized as “fence-sitters” because they would not specify as feminist or nonfeminists. Ten out of 42 of the interviewees identified as feminist, but 4 out of the 10 only identified with certain aspects of feminism. These women who identified only with certain aspects of feminism reported that they distanced themselves from the negative associations of feminism, such as being angry, radical, and against men. The women who refused to identify as a feminist reported similar concerns, that feminism goes “too far”. Several interviewees also believed that feminists are perceived as lesbians, being separate from men, and hating men. The women who were categorized as “fence-sitters” claimed that they did not have enough knowledge of feminism to make a decision. These women also associated feminism with being a strong and involved activist. The findings of Aronson’s (2003) study are similar to the findings of Swirsky and Angelone (2014), that negative stereotypes and associations with the feminist label cause women to be reluctant to identify as feminism, as well as some confusion as to what it means to be a feminist. The findings also revealed that some individuals associate feminism with lesbianism, which they perceive as being anti-male.

Roy, Weibust, and Miller's (2007) study specifically aimed to find out if negative stereotypes about feminism actually deter individuals from identifying as a feminist. In this study, 414 undergraduate women were randomly assigned to read one of three paragraphs. One paragraph contained positive stereotypes about feminists, one contained negative stereotypes about feminists, and the control paragraph was about an unrelated topic. After reading their assigned topics, participants completed a series of surveys to measure attributes such as feminist attitudes, feminist identification, and gender identification. The results showed that 16.7% of women from the control group identified as feminists and 18% of the group exposed to the negative stereotypes identified as feminists. From the group exposed to positive stereotypes, 30.8% of the participants identified as feminist. Roy, Weibust, and Miller (2007) argue that the findings suggest that the negative stereotypes of feminists in the negative paragraph did not provide any new information to participants, or increase their negative attitudes towards feminism. Negative stereotypes of feminists are so common in society that it was not necessary to further prime negative attitudes. The participants who were exposed to the positive portrayals of feminists were given new ideas of feminism, which may have taught them that not everyone thinks negatively of feminists. With these inferences, Roy, Weibust, and Miller (2007) argue that negative stereotypes of feminists are a predominant reason why women choose not to identify with the feminist label. This study also shows the impact that positive stereotypes of feminists have on women identifying as feminists.

Feminism's Presence Online

Some research has been done investigating women's interactions on the Internet and the presence of online feminism. Summers (2010) analyzed a discussion thread titled "*Twilight* is so

Anti-feminism that I want to Cry” on www.thetwilightsaga.com. The discussion board was created in February of 2009 with accusations that the novels’ support of stereotypical gender roles is anti-feminist. Summers (2010) found that young women and girls used the discussion board as a platform to negotiate and shape their understandings of what it means to be a feminist and a woman on the Internet by analyzing different aspects of the novel. She stresses the importance of studying the affects of the Internet on identity construction and the potential it holds as a place for activism for women and girls, such as online feminist spaces.

Dixon (2014) analyzed the concept of hashtag feminism and it’s possible impact on how society defines feminism. Dixon (2014) explains the difficulty of attaching a specific definition to hashtag feminism but provides a few examples of social media campaigns that fall under her definition such as, #bringbackourgirls, #YesAllWomen, #NotYourAsianSidekick, and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen. Social media campaigns such as, #YesAllWomen shape the meaning of hashtag feminism by exposing the personal struggles that women face living in a patriarchal society. #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen provides a different take on hashtag feminism, emphasizing women of color and the specific hardships that they face. Dixon (2014) argues that these different forms of hashtag feminism provide a platform for women to push the limitations of what it means to be a feminist and create communities for women to express their experiences and beliefs globally. She emphasizes the power of these online communities and the importance of research on the subject.

Twitter and Online Activism

Meyer and Bray (2013) analyzed individuals’ usage of social media to participate in new social movement initiatives and their attitudes toward the effectiveness of online movements.

The study also analyzed the understanding and participation in two new social movements, TOMS shoes and To Write Love on Her Arms (TWLOHA). An online survey was distributed via Twitter and Facebook to measure the participant's knowledge of and involvement in new social movements and to assess the understanding of and participation in two particular online social movements, TOMS and TWLOHA. From the 394 surveys completed, 82.5% of the participants claimed to have followed a social cause on Facebook or Twitter. Most participants shared the belief that online social movements have the potential to raise awareness of social issues. About 41.5% of participants expressed that online social movements on social media have great potential for raising awareness because of the ability to quickly convey a message to the masses. However, participants also believed that online social movements are not likely to make progress beyond spreading awareness. About 54.2% conveyed that online movements do not affect their participation in societal change and 34.1% believed that online movements cannot actually make social change occur.

A study by Ciulla et al. (2012) examined the power of Twitter signals by testing the idea that Twitter can be used to predict social phenomena such as, voting outcomes. The researchers of this study analyzed Twitter trends to predict the outcome of the popular television show American Idol, which allows viewers to vote for the contestant of their preference. The researchers collected 677,804 tweets containing certain hashtags and usernames related to the show. The assumption was that the contestant who is featured in the larger number of tweets would get the larger number of votes, thus winning the contest. The desire was to predict the outcome with an extremely minimal set of measures applied to the Twitter data, meaning that the researchers did not take details into account such as tone of the tweets. However, the first

attempt at predicting the winner failed because the researchers did not consider the geographic location of the tweets; voting was restricted to U.S. only. After removing tweets from outside of the U.S, the winner was accurately predicted. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that the attitudes of a large number of people can be observed through open source data on the Internet.

Theoretical Framework

Social identity theory argues that individuals categorize themselves into social groups in which they belong (Chan 2014). Individuals aim to maintain a positive social identity by positively comparing their social group with other groups (Brown 2000; Chan 2014).

Unsatisfactory or negative associations with the group may cause an individual to leave the group, become a member of a more positively evaluated group, or aim to improve the evaluation of their group. Social identity theory can be applied to the current study to aid in explaining the way in which negative associations with feminism may cause individuals to disassociate with feminists and categorize themselves as nonfeminists.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CURRENT STUDY

This study broadens the current literature that analyzes attitudes towards feminism, stereotypes of feminists, and feminist identification. This study also adds to the growing body of literature that appreciates the impact Twitter and other social media networks have on members of society and social movements. This study differs from previous research because it focuses on the common stereotypes and characteristics associated with feminism that are prevalent in a social media campaign created to refute feminism.

Research Questions

Though, the nature of this study is exploratory, I did aim to answer the following three fundamental questions:

1. What are the most salient characteristics associated with feminists?
2. What are the most salient reasons for rejecting feminism?
3. How frequently is #WomenAgainstFeminism used by feminists to refute antifeminist ideals?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were created based on previous literature regarding attitudes toward feminists and social media use:

1. Feminism will be associated with liberal political beliefs.
2. Feminism will be associated with being anti-male.
3. Feminism will be described as unnecessary.
4. Feminists will be described as sexist against males.

Methodology

To obtain data for this study, eight dates were chosen by using a random date generator on the website www.random.org. The generator was set to choose eight dates at random that fell between January 1, 2015 and February 25, 2015. The advanced search feature of Twitter.com was then used to filter tweets that were posted on each of the eight random dates that contained #WomenAgainstFeminism, and were written in English. The “Awesome Screenshot” add-on feature of Firefox Internet browser was then used to capture a full image of the filtered tweets. The images of the tweets were then converted to PDF documents and printed for analysis.

Coding Strategy

The data was first cleared of any tweets that resembled spam, resulting in 626 tweets to be analyzed. Open coding was used to begin categorizing the printed tweets into themes. Each tweet that represented a new theme was assigned a different number, tweets within the same theme were coded with the same number, and this process resulted in 15 themes representing the use of #WomenAgainstFeminism by Twitter users and their attitudes toward feminism, and reasons for rejecting feminism and the feminist label. Axial coding was then used to combine and condense the tweets into 10 final themes. For the purpose of this study, any text and images visible after printing were analyzed; comments in response to tweets, videos, and external links were not considered.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The findings of this study resulted in the following 10 themes representing the use of #WomenAgainstFeminism by Twitter users, their attitudes toward feminism, and reasons for rejecting feminism and the feminist label. Out of the 626 tweets analyzed, 479 tweets were placed into themes, 147 contained unrelated content and were disregarded.

Theme	n	Percent
1. Feminists using #WomenAgainstFeminism ironically	102	21.3
2. Feminism is against equality/different from egalitarianism	59	12.3
3. Patriarchy does not exist	55	11.5
4. Feminists are crazy, hostile, and unintelligent	89	18.6
5. Feminists lie about rape culture and the wage gap	62	12.9
6. Feminists hate men	46	9.6
7. Difference between “true” and “modern” feminism	14	2.9
8. Reproductive rights issues	28	5.8
9. Feminism is unnecessary	17	3.5
10. Feminists are unattractive	7	1.5
Total	479	

Theme 1: Feminists using #WomenAgainstFeminism ironically

One hundred and two (21.3%) of the 479 tweets analyzed fell under theme 1 which represents individuals who identify as feminists using #WomenAgainstFeminism ironically or stating their disagreements with #WomenAgainstFeminism. Many Tweets that were categorized under theme 1 were posted in response to the content under #WomenAgainstFeminism with an argumentative connotation. Some examples of tweets categorized under theme 1 are as follows:

*#HeForShe @bucketList101_ Jan 27
#WomenAgainstFeminism because I like how society tells women that they can't or will never be as good as men in sports*

#HeForShe @bucketList101_Jan 27

#WomenAgainstFeminism because I like how the media over sexualizes our bodies

This Twitter user is using #WomenAgainstFeminism ironically, it is clear that they are actually mocking the content found under the hashtag by emphasizing that being against feminism implies that you “like” that women are not seen as equal to men and that women’s bodies are over sexualized in the media. Another Twitter user posted the following tweet on the same date:

Femme @indigopoetess Jan 27

You’re a #WomenAgainstFeminism but reap the benefits of the 19th amendment everyday

This Twitter user was using #WomenAgainstFeminism to argue against another post under the hashtag that claimed that women did not earn the right to vote. Some other examples of tweets categorized under theme 1 show the confusion and frustration that some Twitter users have with the movement #WomenAgainstFeminism, such as:

Cute little Louis @shipwreckedlou Feb 4

If you’re a women and you’re against this then clearly you don’t know the actual definition #WomenAgainstFeminism

Cute little Louis @shipwreckedlou Feb 4

I will never understand how a woman can be against something that is fighting for her own rights. #WomenAgainstFeminism

Always in my heart @unknownbravery Feb 4

Feminism isn’t about trying to over power men it’s about equality education yourselves #WomenAgainstFeminism

Theme 2: Feminism is against equality and different from egalitarianism

Tweets categorized under theme 2 represent the idea that feminism does not fight for equality, despite what it claims. Many tweets under theme 2 include the argument that feminism does not mean equality for everyone, egalitarianism does. Tweets under theme 2 also include many Twitter users providing examples of ways in which feminism contradicts itself.

Theme 2 consists of 59 (12.3%) of the 479 tweets analyzed. The following are examples of tweets categorized into theme 2:

*Fifty shades of kay @kayleighnovotny Jan 4
It isn't gender equality when you blame one gender and infantilize the other
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

*The Gingerarchy @asredasmhair Jan 27
Duh. Not sure why feminists have such a hard time understanding egalitarianism.
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

*Vic Tom of the Hood @Feminismislies Jan 27
From Feminist to Egalitarian- My Journey a Away from Ignorance: [youtube link]
#FeminismisAwful #WomenAgainstFeminism #VictimHood*

*TigerClaud @TigerClaud Feb 18
@yogi_fem Feminism logic: A man who finds you attractive is objectifying you. A man who doesn't is disrespecting you. #WomenAgainstFeminism*

Theme 3: Patriarchy does not exist

Fifty-five tweets (11.5%) fell under theme 3, representing tweets arguing that the patriarchy and male privilege do not exist. Many tweets under theme 4 also expressed concern that males actually have less rights than women, and that patriarchy was made up by feminists to create control.

*TigerClaud @TigerClaud Feb 17
@aucuparie_ @RealTrumpaFeels So, who runs your putative patriarchy? Santa Claus? Jesus? Justin Beiber? #WomenAgainstFeminsim*

*TigerClaud @TigerClaud Feb 17
"Patriarchy" is the feminists' term for "boogeyman" but it only sounds more grown up.
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

*Trent Max @maximumtrent Feb 8
@neverfadingwood Bc if a woman doesn't get everything she wants the moment she wants it, that's patriarchy. Got it! #WomenAgainstFeminism*

Anika Rose @AnikaRoseAus Feb 8

@phillipDubra @Georgia_Daavies @BenHaycock women in the USA actually have more rights than men. The draft for example #WomenAgainstFeminism

Theme 4: Individuals who identify as feminist are hostile, crazy, and unintelligent

Theme 4 contains 89 tweets (18.6%) that argue that individuals who identify as feminists are hostile toward those who do not identify as feminists. Tweets categorized into theme 5 also describe feminists as crazy, controlling, aggressive, and unintelligent. The tweets coded into theme 5 typically describe the individuals who identify as feminists, not the feminist movement itself.

*CleoPatra @TheJusticeCat Feb 17
Is femtard a word? I seem to be drawn to use it a lot just now...
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

*LostSailor @LostSailorNY Jan 27
Nice genderist dodge! Feminists don't "debate" #WomenAgainstFeminism, they demonize them. Dissent is not allowed....*

*The Gingerarchy @asredasmymhair Jan 27
How is it that even when we make an articulate and fact-based argument, fems still call us ignorant? #WomenAgainstFeminism*

*Green Weenie @GreenWeiner Jan 18
Typical feminist on @cracked. Making death threats. No big deal. #FeminismisAwful
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

*TigerClaud @TigerClaud Jan 18
Notice violent rage from feminist @cyberbitch: this is why feminism is declining; who would want to associate w/ that? #WomenAgainstFeminism*

Theme 5: Feminists lie about rape culture and the wage gap

Theme 5 contains 62 (12.9%) tweets that argue that feminism promotes lies, especially regarding rape culture and the wage gap. The term "rape hoaxes" was commonly used to

describe rape allegations that the Twitter user believed were made up by the female involved.

Theme 5 includes several tweets arguing that famous rape cases are actually “rape hoaxes”.

Theme 5 also includes tweets that argue that there is no significant wage gap between men and women.

*TigerClaud @TigerCaud Feb 17
Every feminist rape hoax makes it harder for real rape victims. #WomenAgainstFeminism*

*Male Tears @MT6_9 Feb 8
#QuestionsforMen
Why do feminist think lying about a rape is a “basic gender right”?
#WomenAgainstFeminism #AntiSJW*

*Mina smith @minasmith62 Jan 4
#RapeCulture is a lie created by #Feminists to criminalize masculinity
#womenAgainstFeminism
LaurenLovesLaykis @JustLaurenB Jan 27
Never. I’ve never asked for consent. Does that mean I’m a rapist too?
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

*The Gingerarchy @asredasmhair Jan 27
Haha. Feminist still be trying to argue the wage gap! Educate yourselves please.
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

Theme 6: Feminists hate men

Theme 7 contains 46 tweets (9.6%) arguing that feminists hate men and boys, a few of which suggest that feminists are wrongfully fearful of men. Feminists are often referred to as “man haters”. Some tweets in theme 6 argue that feminists victimize men as a result of their hatred toward them.

*Nabil @orbvase Jan 27
@Bucketlist101_ Do you honestly believe that “feminism” “protects” women from men and needs to do this? #WomenAgainstFeminism*

*Crimson Hot Mess @CrimsonHotMEss Feb 17
@Republican_Mrs: Remember when Will and Kate had a baby boy, and feminism had a cow? #WomenAgainstFeminism sigh*

*Elizabeth Hobson @ElizabethHobson6 Jan 18
Enough with Mansplaining. And manspreading and manslapping [external link] #MRA
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

*Trent Max @MaximumTrent Feb 10
@DoWeWantTo All feminist's motivations are negative: rage, hatred, envy, revenge,
fear. Nothing good can come of it. #WomenAgainstFeminism*

Theme 7: There is a difference between “true feminism” and “modern feminism”

Theme 7 contains 14 (2.9%) tweets that suggest that there is a difference between “true feminism” and “modern feminism”. Theme 7 also contains tweets that argue that feminism is ruining academia, and the idea that there are “real” feminists and “radical” feminists.

*Karen Mcfly @karenMcfly83 Jan 18
#WomenAgainstFeminism #notheforshe #sheforhe not #yesallwomen How feminism is
ruining higher education [external link]*

*LaurenLovesLeykis @JustLaurenB Feb 10
#WhatFeminismGaveMe
A disgustingly discredited system of “academia”
#WomenAgainstFeminsim*

*goodnight @http_swthrt Feb 17
Stop letting radical feminist ruin a good movement for equality
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

Theme 8: Issues relating to reproductive rights

Theme 8 consists of 28 (5.8%) tweets that discuss issues regarding reproductive and biological rights such as abortion and circumcision. The tweets in theme 8 suggest that feminists are usually pro-choice. Theme 8 also includes tweets that argue against and associate feminism with the normalize breastfeeding movement.

*@basicrepublican Jan 27
Defend a woman keeping her unborn child. Fine.
Defend a man keeping his unborn child.*

*I'm immediately penalized.
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

*EqualB4Law @Equalb4Law Jan 27
Breasts on page 3? Bad
Breasts feeding babies? Good
Got it
#WomenAgainstFeminism #MRA*

*Mina smith @minasmith64 Feb 8
Totally cool to cut on baby genitals, as long as they are boys
#WomenAgainstFeminism*

Theme 9: Feminism is unnecessary

Theme 9 consists of 17 tweets (3.5%) that suggest that feminism does not accomplish anything and is unnecessary, including online feminist movements.

*Mina Smith @minasmith64 Jan 27
What's the point of an ideology that accomplishes none of what it promises,
@HeatherMcMelon_? #Feminists track record sucks
#WomenAgainstFeminsim*

*victorymonk @vicotorymonk Feb 10
Finally, explain to me how #banbossy, #manspreading or #killallmen are going to solve
any of that. #WomenAgainstFeminism*

Theme 10: Feminists are unattractive

Theme 10 contains 7 tweets (1.5%) that refer to the physical appearance of individuals who identify as feminists. The tweets in theme 7 suggest that feminists are physically unattractive and do not shave.

*Tiger Claud @TigerClaud Feb 8
@juddachy Feminists don't need brains- they let their pit & leg hair speak for them. Ick,
it says. #WomenAgainstFeminism.*

*Joli Dixon @geneticJulia Jan 4
I don't give a shit about your armpit hair, I'm just tired of having to hear about it and
your petty misplaced pride. #WomenAgainstFeminism*

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The results of this study supported three out of the four hypotheses. The tweets containing #WomenAgainstFeminism that were analyzed did suggest that feminists are anti-male (theme 6), that feminism is sexist against males (theme 2), and that feminism is unnecessary (theme 9). Though, the findings did not reveal any direct association with feminism and liberal political identification, feminism was associated with some liberal ideology.

Theme 1 (21.3%) was the most salient theme, which represented tweets that were posted by feminists using #WomenAgainstFeminism ironically, or to argue against #WomenAgainstFeminism. This finding suggests that the online presence of feminism is prevalent and shows that there is an ongoing argument among these Twitter users regarding what it actually means to be a feminist. Theme 4 (18.6%) was the second most salient theme and represented the argument that feminists are crazy, hostile, and unintelligent. The tweets categorized under theme 4 represent negative stereotypes that are associated with feminists themselves, rather than the ideals of feminism. This finding suggests that the Twitter users are deterred from identifying as feminists because of the negative association with the term, rather than because they do not agree with feminist ideals. This argument is concurrent with previous literature that suggested that negative stereotypes of feminism are the predominant reason why individuals reject the feminist label (Aronson 2003; Roy, Weibust, and Miller 2007). Social identity theory can be applied to this finding because it argues that individuals will avoid identifying with groups who have negative associations, such as the negative stereotypes that are associated with feminists as a group (Brown 2000; Chan 2014). Theme 2 (12.3%) and theme 5 (12.9%) were also frequently occurring themes, which represent tweets arguing that feminism is

different from egalitarianism, and that feminism promotes lies. These themes suggest that there is a misunderstanding of the ideals of feminism as a movement.

Overall, I argue that the findings of this study show that there is a strong presence of feminism online, and that there is an ongoing debate regarding what it means to be a feminist. Tweets containing #WomenAgainstFeminism represent an array of negative stereotypes that are associated with individuals who identify as feminists, and a misunderstanding of feminism, which may deter individuals from identifying as feminists.

Limitations

For the purpose of this study, I was only able to obtain and analyze 8 days worth of tweets. Though, 8 days of tweets provided a substantial amount of data, it does not allow for a true representation of the attitudes of all Twitter users. The method of printing tweets used for this project did not allow all images to be viewed fully, and did not allow the ability to view videos or click on any external links. Printing tweets also did not allow the ability to expand any replies to tweets or expand conversations.

The common themes described in the findings of this project are only the researchers interpretations of the tweets; interaction with the Twitter users for clarification was not used for the purpose of this project.

Future Research

Because of the sheer scope of Twitter, future research on this topic would benefit from an enhanced method for obtaining and analyzing large amounts of data. It would also benefit from keeping tweets in their original state to enable looking more in depth into the conversations,

watching video links, and visiting external links to get a more accurate idea of what the Twitter user is trying to convey. Exploring other hashtags that are associated with #WomenAgainstFeminism and visiting the Twitter profile @WomenAgainstFeminism would also greatly add to this research topic. Exploring social media sites other than Twitter such as, Tumblr, Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit could also broaden future research. As more people create social media accounts everyday, even more valuable data is available to researchers. It is important that future researchers continue to acknowledge the importance of studying social media and the impact it may have on society as a whole.

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