Men not going their own way: a thick big data analysis of #MGTOW and #Feminism tweets

Anna Maria Górska [ID][a], Karolina Kulicka[b] and Dariusz Jemielniak [ID][a]

[a]Kozminski University, Warsaw, Poland; [b]Independent Scholar

ABSTRACT

Online misogyny is growing at an alarming rate, constituting a violent backlash against feminist activism for gender equality. In our paper, we analyze misogynistic discourses on Twitter generated by #MGTOW (men going their own way) using Thick Big Data. This mixed research method involved a quantitative analysis of 167,582 tweets with #MGTOW and #feminism, followed by a qualitative study of 1,000 tweets of both hashtags. Our study reveals that despite the official narrative of MGTOW as a separatist community of men "going their own way," #MGTOW's central goal is in fact the fight against gender equality. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the language, sentiment, tone, referred sources, and comparisons between #MGTOW and #feminism show that #MGTOW does not simply voice a separatist approach towards women but promotes violence against women and feminism. While feminist tweets are more oriented toward the creation of common identity by referring to shared values and having an internal focus, MGTOW tweets express opposition to "others" and emphasize an "us vs. them" mentality. Our study also shows that online misogyny is something larger than its common definition as a violent anti-women expression in digital environments. It is a defense of a patriarchal system that allows men to claim gender, race, and other kinds of privileges to which they feel entitled.

Introduction

Information and communication technologies have moved social movements and campaigns from the streets and traditional media outlets to the internet (Rezvaneh Rezapour 2018; Sandoval-Almazan and Ramon Gil-Garcia 2014; Zeynep Tufekci 2014). Social media have become primary outlets to share opinions, values, and engage hundreds of thousands of people in collective action (Christian Reuter, Marc-Andre Kaufhold and Thomas Spielhofer 2019). Micro-blogging platforms have catalyzed online activism, leading to "hashtag activism" on Twitter (Ying Xiong, Moonhee Cho, and Brandon Boatwright 2019), and to the Twitter-revolutions (Zeynep Tufekci 2017). Thanks to its communicative characteristics—immediacy, mobilization, media impact, and simplification—Twitter has the capacity to spread messages, generate debates, and create communities of ideologically like-minded users (Reuter et al. 2017).

CONTACT Anna Maria Górska ✉ amg@kozminski.edu.pl ⬛ Kozminski University, Jagiellonska 57 (room A107), 03-301, Warsaw, Poland

Hashtag activism and social media have given feminists unprecedented opportunities to raise consciousness and reach a larger audience (Sarah Jackson, Moya Bailer and Brooke Foucault Welle 2020) It led to the creation of hashtag feminism, which is "a form of feminist activism that appropriates Twitter's metadata tags for organizing posts to draw visibility to feminist causes or experiences" (Rosemary Clark-Parsons 2019, 1). Hashtag feminism is a part of a broader, historically heterogeneous, feminist movement that seeks to improve the position of women in the society and promote equality and justice (Karen Beckwith 2007). It does not form a single political program but encapsulates a diversity of interests and spatial locations.

As feminist hashtag activism has spread (Jhackson, Bailey, and Foucault Welles 2020), so have the reach and power of online communities that promote misogyny (Kim Barker and Olga. O Jurasz 2018).

The aim of this research was a close study of the misogynistic online content generated by men going their own way (MGTOW), which is one of the fastest growing online "meninist" communities on the internet.[1] To understand how misogyny is enabled, carried out, and reinforced by #MGTOW, we used a mixed-research method of Thick Big Data (Dariusz Jemielniak 2020). We performed an initial large dataset quantitative analysis of 167,582 tweets, followed by a qualitative study of 1000 tweets informed by the results of the quantitative phase. We analyzed 28,280 tweets with #MGTOW published between April 2018 and January 2020, comparing the tone, nature, and content of #MGTOW dataset with 139,302 #feminism tweets as a contextual back-drop. The analysis of the tone and content of these two datasets involved sentiment analysis (emotionality and tone of the tweets), the level of subjectivity in phrasing, the use of pronouns, referenced sources, and the engagement of tweets measured by replies, retweets, and favorited tweets. In the qualitative part of the study, we closely read the most popular tweets, analyzing the most commonly used words and their content in general.

Studying #MGTOW and #feminism in tandem was not intended to draw straightforward conclusions about the differences between the two hashtag users, whose demographics are quite different. Finding the differences in tone and content between these two datasets was instead an effort to better understand the actual goals and power dynamics of #MGTOW tweets in the digital environment. We aimed to contextualize #MGTOW against the terrain of gender and power struggles on which it operates, in response to Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kate Miltner's (2016, 176) call "to look at [popular misogyny] as a whole, and not independently at its individual parts."

This study focuses on MGTOW as one of the most popular and fastest growing groups in the Manosphere (Callum Jones, Verity Trott, and Scott Wright 2019). MGTOWs are comprised mostly of straight, white, middle-class men from North America and Europe (Ke Lin 2017). Apart from its growing size, this study focused specifically on MGTOW because of its claim to not be overtly associated with violence against women like other meninist groups. MGTOW men eschew romantic relationships with women and seek self-empowerment instead. They reject what they see as a gynocentric order of the world. As Lin (2017) writes, "unlike other anti-feminist groups, MGTOW espouse the abandonment of women and Western society that has been corrupted by feminism. The existing system, to them, is impossible to amend, so MGTOWs are 'going their own way'" (78).

Our analysis finds that despite the official narrative of MGTOW as a separatist community, MGTOW's central goal is a hostile attack on women's emancipation and a defense of men's patriarchal privilege, whose violence-promoting power is largely underestimated.

Our study also expands the recent theoretical work on online misogyny by providing empirical examples that the misogyny of the MGTOW group is more than hostility to women. Most studies of online violence and harassment of women conceptualize misogyny as hostility against women in online spaces. For example, Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) define popular misogyny as "a basic anti-female violent expression that circulates to wide audiences on popular media platforms" (172). Zeerak Waseem (2016) defines misogyny as "hateful content targeting women" (140). Building on recent theoretical reformulations of misogyny in the feminist theory (Kate Manne 2017, 2020), our analysis of #MGTOW tweets shows that not all women are equally targeted by #MGTOW tweets. Particular hostility is directed toward those women who question men's patriarchal entitlement to moral goods traditionally provided by women such as sex, care, and admiration. These findings confirm that a documented, historical co-constutitive link between MGTOW as a form of men's rights activism and the feminist movement exists also in the current digital environment. Men's rights activism emerged in response to second-wave feminism in the 1970s, presenting a flipped narrative of men are victims of gender discrimination (Ging, Debbie, and Eugenia Siapera 2019). As Jones, Trott, and Wright (2019) put it, quoting the MGTOW website, "feminism is the gasoline" to the MGTOW fire (14). Therefore, as feminism gains popularity, communities like MGTOW "will continue to grow and become a space in which men try to reclaim and reinforce hegemonic masculinity in response to the perceived loss of power they experience in mainstream society" (Jones, Trott, and Wright 2019, 15).

Last but not least, although the study of race and class and systems of oppression intersecting with gender discrimination was beyond the scope of this study, the analysis of tweets included in this research project also brings into visibility an intersection between misogyny and other interlocking systems of oppression such as racism, xenophobia, and white supremacy (Ging and Siapera 2019; Manne 2017). Our findings show that social hierarchies defended by MGTOWs are founded both on a patriarchal gender order and on a perception of the superiority of white and Western culture and civilization as well as a higher expectation of submissiveness from women of color.

Close examination of the operating patterns of online misogyny in the Manosphere is timely and important because of its power to affect political, social, and power relations in the contemporary world. Only recently the USA, the UK, Canada, and Australia, started to consider the incel (involuntary celibate ideology as terrorism (Eviane Leidig 2021). In most countries, the police, policymakers, and the media fail to recognize the threat the Manosphere's communities pose to women and minority groups (Sophie McBain 2020). MGTOW followers are often presented in mainstream media as a pitiful group of separatists, and who focus on self-development and preservation (Jones, Trott, and Wright 2019). However, the online activism of misogynistic Twitter users should not be underestimated as it has the documented power to incite violence in the real world (McBain 2020; Jessica O'Donnell 2020).

Theoretical background and literature review

This article's departure from the traditional conception of online misogyny as hostility against women in online spaces was inspired by Kate Manne's theoretical work on misogyny. Instead of conceptualizing misogyny as "a property of individual misogynists who are prone to hate women qua women" (2017, 18), Manne defines it as a system that

> functions to enforce and police women's subordination and to uphold male dominance, against the backdrop of other intersecting systems of oppression and vulnerability, dominance and disadvantage, as well as disparate material resources, enabling and constraining social structures, institutions, bureaucratic mechanisms, and so on (2017, 19).

Manne's (2017, 2020) redefinition of misogyny was especially useful for our study. Her attention to the systemic aspects of misogyny conceptualizes online misogyny as a part of a patriarchal system of power, rather than individualistic expressions of hate and frustration by members of the Manosphere community. Moreover, Manne's reconceptualization of misogyny explains what kind of statements about gender relations evoke the most hostile and violent reactions from misogynists. As she writes in *Entitled*, "misogyny does not target all women across the board, but those who violate patriarchal norms" (2020, 27).

Several studies have noted an alarming trend in which misogyny permeates digital environments and culminates in the online harassment of feminists and women. As Sarah Banet-Weiser (2018) writes in *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*, popular misogyny expressed in digital environments responds to the unprecedented visibility of popular feminism on digital platforms. Popular feminist discourses that emphasize self-confidence, body positivity, access to institutional power, and the refusal to provide men with feminine-coded goods such as sex or care work evokes violent misogynist reactions such as depictions of rape (Clare McGlynn, Erika Rackley and Ruth Houghton 2017), men's rights movements, or physical attacks. As popular feminism and popular misogyny are thus co-constitutive, we analyze them together in this study.

Research has demonstrated the threat posed by online misogyny Barker and Jurasz (2018). The repeated use of misogynistic statements and words contributes to the socialization of misogynistic and sexist rhetoric (Jones, Trott, and Wright 2019, 13). Misogynistic views are normalized through memes and sexist humor (Limor Shifman and Dafna Lemish 2011). A large part of online misogyny comes from a digital media environment that is referred to as the Manosphere. As Jack Bratich and Sarah Banet-Weiser (2019) explain, "the various sites within the Manosphere should not be understood as distinct units or groups, but rather as interconnected nodes in a mediated network of misogynistic discourses and practices" (13). The Manosphere is the digital manifestation of men's rights activism, and the men's liberation movement, both of which are rooted in misogyny (Farrel et al. 2019). The Manosphere sub-groups include incels, PUAs (pick-up artists), and RedPill, all of which are united by the narrative of male victimhood, anti-feminism are a refusal to believe in gender inequality (Leidig 2021). Incels, who complain that they have been sexually rejected by women, lash out violently against them (Maria Scaptura and Kaitlin Boyl 2020) PUAs brag about deceiving or manipulating women into sexual relationships (Trott 2020). The RedPill ideology evolved from *The Matrix*, where men have to choose between the red pill (which opens their eyes to reality) and blue pill

(which allows them to stay deluded) (Wright, Trott, and Jones 2020). Those who chose to open their eyes are able to see that the world is dominated by privileged women, while men are marginalized.

Method and data collection

Our study examined 167,582 tweets under 16,444 unique usernames, using the hashtags #feminism and #MGTOW, and published between April 19 2018 and January 1 2020. Of these, 139,302 tweets by 52,619 unique usernames used #feminism and 28,280 tweets by 4,481 unique usernames used #MGTOW. The sample showed that #MGTOW was repeatedly used by the same users. Additionally, #MGTOW was used much less often than #feminism. The difference in the size of the two samples was not considered problematic, because we were analyzing the most common behaviors and patterns in each sample. The proportion of accounts to tweets (roughly 1 to 10) is typical, and the distribution of tweeting accounts follows the typical standards of online communities' power law participation distribution (Tadeusz Chełkowski et al. 2021).

Our analysis focused on Twitter as a manifestation of public discourse. We realize that many important, culture- and norm-forming discussions take place in closed groups on Facebook or Telegram (Sugiura Lisa 2021; Roth-Cohen Osnat 2021). Although these discussions are crucial for internal coordination and enculturation, they are designed to exclude the outer world. Even seemingly public discussions, on platforms such as Reddit or YouTube (Luc Cousineau 2021; Robin Mamie, Manoel Horta Ribeiro, and Robert West 2021), also may contribute to the bunkerization of views, not to their dissemination (Philippe Duguay 2021). In this study, we were particularly interested in conversations that are intended to persuade the public and people from the opposing camps. The focus on Twitter as a service positioned for public communication and making ideological stands (Katarzyna Jezierska 2022) is also useful for analyzing contemporary online misogyny a phenomenon that is responsive to and shaped by feminists' activities on social media.

Focusing on the time frame 2018–2020 allowed us to study the phenomena prior to Twitter's improved moderation practices—although it is worth noting that the changing affordances of Twitter affect the discourse in particular ways and shape the types of discussions taking place. More importantly, we wanted to avoid the COVID-19 discussions that flooded Twitter after January 2020. April 2018 was chosen as an arbitrary starting point for the growth of MGTOW online communities, which began in early 2018 (Jones et al. 2019)

We relied on the GetOldTweets3 Python script to retrieve the tweets. Because of this approach, we only analyzed tweets that were still available online at the time of collection. We consider this result to be a feature rather than a bug in our approach, as it allowed us to study tweets that conformed to Twitter's community standards and were therefore considered acceptable public discourse. Such an approach is in line with the current research ethics practices endorsed by AOIR (the Association of Internet Researchers). Additionally, it allows accounting for Twitter moderation practices, which shape the activity on the platform.

We used a mixed-method of Thick Big Data (Jemielniak 2020), performing an initial large dataset quantitative analysis, followed by a more thorough qualitative study informed by the quantitative one. This approach allowed us to keep the breadth of analysis provided by a large sample of data and select the quantitatively most important tweets while achieving qualitative depth of narrative analysis of their content.

As part of our initial analysis, we measured the sentiment of the collected tweets. We used TextBlob (Adrian Micu et al. 2017), to estimate the subjective/objective and positive/negative load of the content in both datasets. We also conducted a media sources analysis, by extracting all URLs from posts, revealing the final addresses from URL shorteners (such as bit.ly), studying the main domain of the linked media, and then identifying the most frequent words used in both datasets. This approach allowed us to study the extent to which the media spheres of both datasets were separate—in other words, whether their filter bubbles overlapped in terms of used sources. The method allowed for a comparative analysis of statistically relevant differences between large datasets of tweets with #MGTOW and #feminism but did not allow for analyzing explicit direct interactions and responses between these two hashtags (such as discussions between the users of the two hashtags of specific events).

The quantitative analysis was followed by a qualitative content analysis of the 1,000 most popular tweets from both communities, which represented the content that elicited the most reactions, which is a good proxy of social reach and influence. The popularity of the tweets was understood as the sum of replies, retweets, and favorites, and we chose the top 500 tweets from each dataset based on these criteria. Each of the 1,000 tweets was manually coded and analyzed. The coding scheme was based on an inductive approach, drawing on observations and analysis of tweets. All tweets for the qualitative analysis were manually coded, according to our coding scheme. The additional qualitative analysis allowed for closer analysis and comparison of the words, actions, and experiences in the two datasets.

In the article, we use pseudonyms and make minor changes to tweets so that messages still retain their original meaning, but without being easily traceable to the author. The Association of Internet Researchers recommends this practice to ensure ethical research (Ke Lin 2016). We deliberately avoided quoting extremely misogynist, offensive, and violent tweets verbatim so as not to give misogyny and violence another outlet.

One important limitation of our study is its focus on English tweets, and we only focused on the text part of shared tweets. Additionally, even though we tried to choose hashtags that were in opposition to each other, it is worth mentioning that #MGTOW is a specific group hashtag, while #feminism reflects a broader and more heterogeneous feminist movement. The various levels of engagement, as well as disparity in the numbers of tweets in the two datasets, can be explained by this difference. The global scope of collected tweets constitutes both strength of this research and a possible limitation, as based on the data we were not able to pinpoint specific events around which both datasets were in conversation with one another. The tweets referred to the ongoing situation as far away as Bangladesh and USA. We also did not study how #MGTOW tweets respond to and interact with specific tweets and other hashtag, but focused on the analysis of the nature, content, and tone of the tweet's dataset.

Quantitative study results and discussion

Sentiment analysis

To determine whether each tweet was positive or negative, we used TextBlob, a Python library. It evaluates each tweet's semantic orientation and the intensity of each word in a sentence (Micu et al. 2017). The sentiment analysis captures the emotions and tone of the writer of the tweets. To describe the tweets' polarized sentiment, we used a numerical

(nominal) value (−1 to 1) and a scale (very negative, negative, neutral, positive, and very positive). The tweets below are examples of positive and negative sentiment polarity in both datasets. Here is an example of negative sentiment in #MGTOW:

> I'm sure everyone can see what's wrong with this, wrong and how toxic living with a weemin is, on top of that they hold you back and you can't achieve your goals because they want to monopolize your time Go #mgtow gents, don't take this abuse

Below is an example of positive sentiment in #feminist:

> You thought 2018 was the Year of the Woman? Wait until you see the BEST #feminist moments of 2019. It will make you smile, laugh and feel PROUD of all the women owning their voice, rewriting history and embracing their power. Bring on 2020.

The sentiment polarities analysis and comparison of #feminism and #MGTOW tweets found a statistically significant difference (p < 0.001) between the two datasets. The differences were especially pronounced for extreme sentiments. #feminism was more likely to use very positive sentiment and #MGTOW very negative sentiment. This was also reflected in the polarization of the tweets across time. #MGTOW seemed to have a sentiment closer to neutral, unlike the more positive sentiment of #feminism. The differences in sentiment and polarization between the two datasets were statistically significant (p < 0.001).

The differences in sentiment overall, and especially in the extreme sentiments, illustrate the differences in the tone of the communication in the datasets. #MGTOW has more negative sentiment, which proves that the communication is focused on criticism and attack (Jones et al. 2019) compared to #feminism, which is more positive and supportive (Clark-Parsons 2019; Jackson, Bailey, and Foucault Welles 2020). Moreover, the change over time suggested a negative relation between the groups. The two sentiments followed the opposite trend over time: when sentiment polarity for #MGTOW decreased, #feminism's increased and vice versa. However, we are not able to pinpoint what events induced the positive or negative sentiments of the tweets.

Subjectivity analysis

Subjectivity analysis distinguishes subjective opinions, emotions, and judgments from tweets that offer general information. Subjectivity is a measure of phrasing, not of factuality; for example, fake news and disinformation may often be expressed in neutral, objective language to increase its plausibility and para-scientific flavor (Dariusz Jemielniak and Yaroslav Krempovych 2021).

Our analysis showed statistically significant differences in phrasing between the two datasets (p < 0.001). #feminist tweets seemed more subjective than #MGTOW ones. Feminist activists were more likely to cite their own opinions and experiences, while MGTOWs were more likely to use authoritative language and non-opinion statement language (whether true or not) and citing para scientific theories that support their views.

Subjectivity analysis reveals that the #MGTOW users portray themselves as a reasonable response to feminism, supportive of equality and men's rights (Jones, Trott, and Wright 2019). MGTOWs were more likely to express authoritative, "know it all" statements, than were writers in the feminist dataset, who were more likely to share their own experiences. The following examples show how the two datasets used objective or subjective language.

#feminist tweets were more likely to refer to own experiences and use subjective phrases:

> I have attended many panels on #Feminism. This one is undoubtedly the most insightful, conclusive and progressive. These women on stage @yoginisd @Shubhrastha @psitsgaya-tri Som Dutta and moderated by Pallavi Joshi. So positive. So insightful. And so spiritual.

#MGTOW tweets, in contrast, were more likely to present definitive statements as facts:

> Marriage can be seen as a type of modern day slavery for men, except you can buy your freedom by paying half your life savings and your house. #Marriage is #slavery go #mgtow instead.

The revealed differences in phrasing with regard to subjectivity can be contextualized and explained from the epistemological perspective. Contemporary feminist theory offers a number of different feminist epistemological approaches to knowledge production (see Regine Bendl 2000), all of which point to a long-standing association between masculinity, rationality, and objectivity. Historically, the masculine experience and perspective has been posited as a non-situated, universal standpoint in the system of knowledge production: an objective truth. The MGTOW statements that present definite statements as facts similarly assume "that the way the world appears to oneself is the way it appears to everyone" (Elizabeth Anderson 1995, 81).

This finding is in line with Jones et al. (2019), who argued that MGTOWs purposely use language in a way to "seem like common sense" (1) and thus to appeal to rational thinking. This is a strategy similar to "All Lives Matter," a slogan intended to undermine the Black Lives Matter movement (Mary Angela Bock and Ever Josue Figueroa 2018).

The use of pronouns: collective vs. individual approach and external vs. internal focus

To understand the groups, we analyzed the collective vs. individualistic and internal vs. external focus. We analyzed the percentages of tweets using "me" language ("me," "mine," "myself," and "my"), which represents an internal, individual approach; "we" language ("we," "us," "our," "ourself," and "ourselves"), an internal, collective approach; "you" language ("you," "your," "yourself," and "yourselves"), an external, individual approach; and "they" language ("they," "them," "their," "themself," and "themselves"), an external, collective approach (Figure 1). The differences between #MGTOW and #feminist were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Interestingly, while "me" and "you," were used with similar frequency, #feminism tweets used "we," internally focused language, much more often (12% vs. 7% of #MGTOW tweets). An example follows:

> A #Feminist #PrideMonth PSA: Remember that our #feminism must be inclusive not only to ciswomen, but to transwomen as well.

#MGTOW tweets used "they" language much more often (18% vs. 9% of #feminism tweets):

> Make no mistake, they'll find a way to rationalize screwing your life #mgtow
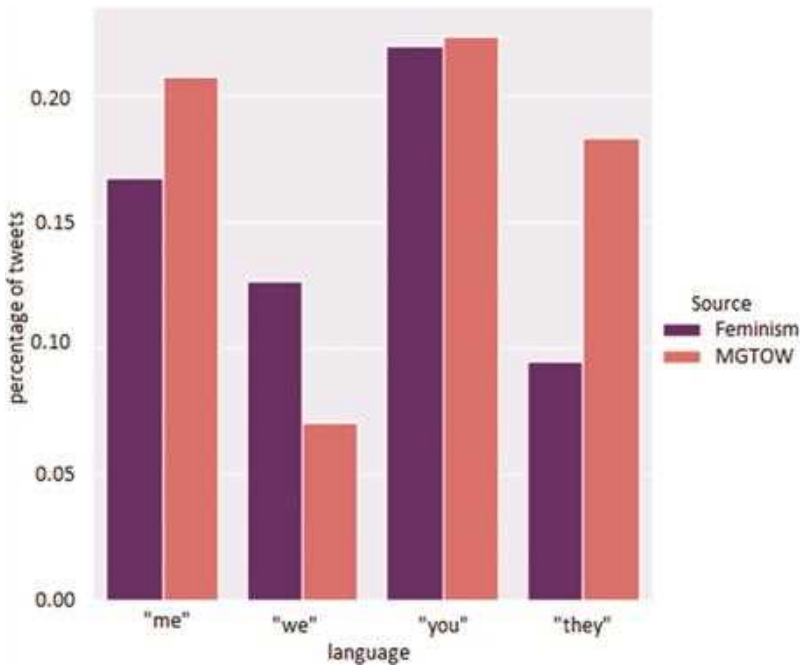
Figure 1. Distribution of pronouns in tweets for #MGTOW and #feminism.

These findings are consistent with Jessica O'Donnell (2020) and Ke Lin (2016), who suggest that at the heart of #MGTOW is the fight against oppression by women, with an external focus. Similarly, Jones, Trott, and Wright (2019), found that MGTOW "dialogue is centered around women—again due to the fact that they must perform a rejection of women to belong within the community" (13).

We interpret this result as signifying that feminist tweets are more oriented to the creation of common identity by referring to shared values and thus have an internal focus. In contrast, #MGTOW tweets appear to express opposition and emphasize an "us vs. them" position. Contrary to the official group's separatist ideology, the group's tweets, paradoxically, centers on women rather than their own way of life. As the qualitative analysis of the most popular #MGTOW tweets will show, the women-centered tweets MGTOW contain violent, denigrating messages about women and the feminist movement.

Differences in sources

To understand the differences in how online public discourse is constructed between the two datasets studied here, we examined the media they are using as references to their posts. Such a study allows us to show what sources are considered useful and valid enough to support an argument. If the pools of media sources overlapped, we could argue that the differences in discourse relied on contrasting interpretations of the same data. However, if there were significant differences between the media sources most

commonly used, this could indicate that users of the studied hashtags inhabit different filter bubbles, associations, and have different cultural norms standard of what constitutes a reliable, noteworthy source.

The URL analysis showed significant differences between the datasets. In both cases, the most popular sources were social media and blogs. The most popular traditional media outlets in #MGTOW tweets were from the British tabloid the *Daily Mail* and the US right-wing network Fox News, followed by *The Guardian*. In #Feminism tweets, the most popular was *The Guardian*, followed by *The New York Times* and the BBC. It should be noted that most members of the MGTOW group are straight, white, middle-class men from North America and Europe (Lin 2016). Feminists are a broader, more educated, and more diverse community, and a significant proportion of members are younger than 30 years old (Jill Swirsky and D. J. Angelone 2016). These demographic differences are reflected in the choice of shared media, as *Fox News* and the *Daily Mail* are targeted at conservative middle-class, middle-aged people with below-average education; the *New York Times* and the BBC are outlets targeted at younger and more liberal audiences (Pew Research Center 2012; Statista 2021).

Even when comparing the professional media alone—whose affiliations are more clearly discernible across party lines—it is clear that these groups rely on siloed sources, a phenomenon accelerated by social media recommendation mechanisms (Jonas Kaiser and Adrian Rauchfleisch 2020). *The Guardian* is an interesting exception, which is cited by both #MGTOW and #feminism datasets. Typically *The Guardian* is targeted at liberal and left-wing audiences (Colin Sparks 2003). Nevertheless, how #MGTOW uses this source in their tweets is beyond the study, thus it is not certain whether the #MGTOW cites the articles to support or criticize the content.

Level of engagement: replies, retweets, and favorites

Within our analysis, we also considered the engagement of the users through replies, retweets, and favorited tweets, where we found statistically significant differences. In the #MGTOW group, 51% of all tweets collected were replied to, compared to only 14% of #feminist tweets ($p < 0.001$). This may suggest that despite #MGTOW being a smaller group, the participants are more engaged in the online conversation. This does not come as a surprise, given the characteristics of the groups and that MGTOW is rather close-knit subculture, while #feminism users is a broader and more diverse group.

Similarly, this was visible with retweets and favorited tweets: 42% of all #MGTOW tweets received replies, but only 25% of #feminist tweets did. With favorited tweets, the difference was even more apparent: 92% of #MGTOW tweets were favorited but fewer than half of #feminist tweets were. For replies and favorited tweets, we found statistically significant differences ($p < 0.001$), with higher reply and favorite rates. It should be emphasized that the #MGTOW community is smaller than the #feminism one; however, the data indicated that the #MGTOW community is much more engaged.

Within the study, we also observed differences in terms of the sentiment of tweets replied to, retweeted, and favorited ($p < 0.001$). Feminist tweets that built higher engagement had a more positive polarization of the message ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, we found that feminist activists were more likely to engage with posts that had a more positive tone, compared to #MGTOW, where the highest engagement was with tweets with

a negative tone. This may be a reflection of the basis of the groups, as feminism is more focused on positive values and positive social change Banet-Weiser (2018). In contrast, MGTOW is based on negative values, such as hostility to women (Jones, Trott, and Wright 2019; Lin 2017; Wright, Trott, and Jones 2020).

Qualitative content analysis

To go deeper, we performed a qualitative content analysis of the #MGTOW and #feminism tweets. By selecting 1000 most popular tweets from both groups, we tried to understand their tone and content. The word clouds below illustrate the most common terms used in each of the datasets Figures 2 and 3.

Centeredness on women

As visible in the word clouds, both datasets' content focused on women, but from opposite perspectives. #feminism users put women's rights and stories at the center. In contrast, the MGTOW community uses social media to vilify feminists and women generally. Despite the official narrative of MGTOW being a movement to support men's autonomy, this word cloud analysis shows that the MGTOW group is very much oriented toward women and hostile not only to women themselves, but first and foremost to the feminist movement, women's emancipation and women asserting their rights. #feminism

Figure 2. Word cloud of the most common words used in #MGTOW tweets.

Figure 3. Word cloud of the most common words used in #feminism tweets.

was used primarily for positive reinforcement and to educate society about feminism and its importance. Most commonly, it referred to empowerment, equality, and gender, as illustrated by the following example:

> Feminism is not hatred towards men. Feminism is not about making women superior to men. Feminism is not about discouraging or discriminating men. Feminism is about equality and it's for everyone. #letsallbefeminists #Feminism #EqualityForAll

Conversely, #MGTOW tweets commonly referred to women and feminism, taking on a "them" perspective, as found in the quantitative analysis. Even though a central part of #MGTOW rhetoric is the rejection of relationships with women, much of their content centered on women:

> Men are the makers of our reality, the weemins just live in it, men are action, the weemins just talk about it to virtue signal and don't do crap unless is to get them free stuff and money #MGTOW

The hallmark of #MGTOW communication was hatred and rejection of women. Much of their content consisted of anti-feminist and violent statements. At the same time, #MGTOW users felt misunderstood and unfairly judged by society, as shown in the following tweet:

> Independent man (#MGTOW) = misogynistic women hater. Independent woman = strong feminist role model. Ever notice the asymmetry?

To explain their own hatred of women and feminists, #MGTOW users argued that feminism is about hatred of men:

> Feminists hate men and boys, they're having gender targeted abortions, and hate to pay child support and alimony forced by the same tools they've created to screw men over #mgtow

Some users of #MGTOW claimed to support everyone's rights, unlike the feminist movement that represents only a part of the population. However, this is only a rhetorical strategy to appeal to "common sense" (Jones, Trott, and Wright 2019). As shown in the quantitative analysis, #MGTOW users want to appear objective, while "equality for all" is meant to undermine the feminist movement and gender equality, while upholding the patriarchical norms under which men benefit. This rhetorical strategy is also inconsistent with the outstanding discourse in the community that men are superior to women.

MGTOW entitlement and defense of the patriarchal system

The misogyny of the MGTOW group is more than hostility to women. The qualitative analysis of #MGTOW tweets shows that they defend a system in which men are entitled to certain goods by simply being men. The following tweet illustrates the expectation for women to look up to men on the basis of their gender:

> They don't love you the man, they love you for what you can do for them, the moment you dont toss that cash, you become a leper. . .. Just gyow #mgtow

The tweet expresses the frustration that some women do not simply love "the man," but rather expect financial and other kinds of goods. This expectation is found unacceptable.

The word cloud analysis showed that one of the most popular words for #MGTOW was "want." #MGTOW users expected women to provide them with moral goods: sexual pleasure, attention, care, sympathy, respect, admiration, and nurturing. In many tweets, it was clear that the MGTOW community believes that it is women's obligation to take care of men:

> Weemin are replaceable. That chick you can't get over? You can replace with a silicon doll, that will do the same as the weemin, just lay there on her back n not do anything, also not knowing how to cook or clean. . . But the doll will keep her mouth shut and won't nag you #mgtow

Unless women cater to men, they can be replaced. #MGTOW tweets expressed disappointment and frustration about the social changes that make it more difficult for men to claim pleasure from women without asking for their consent or reciprocating:

> Now, is illegal to stare at girls. How dare a boy look at a girl directly in her eyes, did he forget he is a second class citizen? #mgtow #boysmatter #gentlemensclub #toxicfemininity #resetyourlife 12-year-old boy suspended for staring at girl

The flipside of this entitlement is violence against women who refuse to provide men with feminine-coded goods or who can no longer give men what they want. Not all women are targets of hate speech and harassment from #MGTOW tweets. Particularly intense and aggressive reactions are directed at women who question men's patriarchal entitlement to receive traditionally feminine goods such as sex, care, attention, admiration, reproductive labor, and sympathy, or who claim traditionally masculine goods such as power,

authority, and knowledge (Manne 2020, 27). By targeting women by #MGTOW we do not mean directly responding to specific women or tweets on Twitter, as our method did not allow us to study direct interactions. What we mean is insulting, criticizing, denigrating, name calling women who—online and offline—are seen as not complying the patriarchal status quo.

Persons targeted by #MGTOW include celebrities (e.g., Alyssa Milano, Angelina Jolie, Katy Perry, Taylor Swift, Meghan Markle), specific persons known personally to the tweets' authors (e.g., ex-wives), professionals (e.g., female security guards, women in the military, sex workers), women accusing Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault, movie characters, participants of TV shows. A lot of aggression and criticism is directed at women who report rape or sexual abuse to the police. Also feminist campaigns and events trigger negative reactions from MGTOWs, including #sexstrike, feminist fat acceptance movement, #Metoo, #MetooIndia, #SurvivingRKelly #timesup, #paygap, and more, which we were not able to identify as the scope of the tweets is global and the discussed events come from all over the world.

#MGTOW users make a distinction between "good," "nice," or "decent" women who are subordinate to men and those who reject patriarchal rules and men's entitlement. This is in line with Kate Manne's argument that misogyny is not hatred of all women but only of those who do not comply with the patriarchal norms. As Manne (2020) puts it, misogynists can love their mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, girlfriends, and secretaries (52) and still hate those who do not act the way men want them to act. The following tweet illustrates the distinction between generalized "good" and "bad" women:

> Today, I will only open the door for my mother ..else I could be called a sexist and she could claim I touched her. For you "good women" out there .clean up this shit;#MGTOW! #MenToo

In #MGTOW tweets, special attention and violence are directed against feminists, who reject patriarchal norms and male superiority. "Good women" turn into enemies when they identify as feminists. Feminists are. e.g., "lunatics," "hypocrites," "homewrecks," who attack men and should be denied any resources:

> #FeminismIsCancer

Earlier studies revealed that MGTOW members rely not only on sexist tropes but also on racism, white supremacy, and xenophobia to assert their entitlement (Jones, Trott, and Wright 2019; Manne 2020; Wright, Trott, and Jones 2020). This observation was confirmed in our study. #MGTOW users use racist and xenophobic slogans to warn against the threat posed by the feminist movement:

> #MGTOW #incels #antifeminism Feminism has created a downward spiral which will ultimately lead to the extinction of Western civilisation and the takeover of Muslims. Western civilisation and culture are doomed because of feminism.

These tweets point to a potent intersection between misogyny and other interlocking systems of oppression such as racism and xenophobia. Social hierarchies, defended by MGTOWs, are constituted not only by a patriarchal gender order, but also by a history of racism and colonialism. MGTOWs' defense of their entitlement is also a defense of their white, Western privilege—a perception of a superiority of Western and white culture, civilization, claims to knowledge with regard to other parts of the world.

The relationship between MGTOWs and other men

MGTOWs also criticize and belittle men who they see are complacent with the "gyno-centric" norms created by women that oppress men and are corrupted by feminism. They are referred to as "soy boys," "white knights," and "simps." In the eyes of MGTOWs, those men are "brainwashed" and traitors to their gender. MGTOWs claim that they are higher in the social hierarchy of men because they took the "red pill" and are "awakened." Other men live by the humiliating rules imposed by women. "red pill" is a term used in the Manosphere to describe a world oblivious to men's oppression by women:

> The best advice for young men * Avoid Western Universities * Work in Trade * Avoid women at work * Never DATE * Never cohabit with females * Never EVER MARRY * Be willing to admit the law is DESIGNED since 70s to be against MEN (DULUTH) * Watch red pill & MGTOW content #MGTOW

> This is every woman's fantasy (to enslave men) and there are plenty of thirsty simp manginas willing to make it happen for them #mgtow

The analysis of #MGTOW leads to the conclusion that some of the hashtag users also feel disadvantaged and marginalized by the patriarchal system. They do not live up to the patriarchal expectations of masculinity, where masculinity is measured through sexual and other kinds of relationships with women, who are treated as trophies and status symbols. Thus, going their own way means escaping masculine hierarchies measured by the level of feminine-coded goods and securing a higher position on their own terms, by rejecting relations with women:

> #incel is, simply put, a male who refuses to pay for sex. Anyone with $200 in their pocket is not an incel—they refuse to pay for sex. What they don't realize is that ALL men pay for sex, in one way or another. "Married man sex" is the most expensive kind of all- Sid #mgtow

MGTOWs are better and more aware than other men because they understand the danger of engaging with women:

> This Is Why Smart Men Are Avoiding Relationships #MGTOW

Men who continue to engage with women (those who chose the blue pill) are "pathetic," beta males that allow themselves to be subordinated to women:

> Like dinosaurs, rinos, polar bears Blue pill men are rapidly going to extinct. #MGTOW epidemic is started all over the world in different names. That's all.

Summing up, the qualitative analysis of MGTOW tweets shows that online misogyny by #MGTOW users is more than hostility to women. #MGTOW tweets aim to preserve a patriarchal system of dominance and entitlement. This is not surprising considering the historical roots of the Manosphere and men's liberation movement as a response to the perceived loss of power resulting from the actions of the feminist movement.

The violence and aggression in the analyzed tweets is incited by the perceived shattering of the patriarchal system, in which some men are no longer loved for being men, as stated in one of the quoted tweets. #MGTOW tweets draw a distinction between "good," women, who are willing to provide men with what they want and demand in their tweets and those who do not. Particularly aggressive reactions are directed at feminists and feminism, who are described as "cancer" and "toxic."

Some of the frustration and aggression that constitute online misogyny is directed, paradoxically, at other men. #MGTOW users criticize men who continue to engage with women and posit present themselves as more aware and smarter than those men. The belittlement of men who stay in relationships with women suggests that MGTOW users themselves do not actually feel good in the patriarchal system. However, rather than questioning its rules, they want to escape it all together (at least in their official narrative), or just receive more feminine-coded goods to increase their social status and position in masculine hierarchies, against other more dominant men.

As the quantitative analysis of #MGTOW tweets reveals, their rhetoric betrays an intersection between online misogyny and other forms of oppression, especially racism and xenophobia. The analyzed tweets show that the feminist movement is presented not only as a threat to men, but to Western civilization as a whole. Therefore, MGTOWs' defense of their entitlement is also a defense of their white, Western privilege and a perception of their superiority vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

At the same time, white, Western women, are perceived as more independent and therefore more threatening than women from other parts of the world. In #MGTOW rhetoric, gender stereotypes and sexism are entangled with racial stereotypes of non-Western women as more submissive, more eager to provide goods expected by men than white women.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that despite its official rhetoric of going their own way, central to MGTOW is the opposition to women's emancipation. MGTOW strives to uphold the patriarchal order and anyone not willing to do so it is a traitor to men.

Our study showed major differences in the language and expression of views between #feminism and #MGTOW. We also found that feminist tweets were more oriented to creating a common identity and referred to shared values, while #MGTOW was externally focused on enemies such as feminists. The patriarchal gender order defended by MGTOW also intersects with the defense of the notion of superiority of white and Western culture and civilization.

As feminist ideas gain recognition, so grows the power of online misogynistic communities to affect political and social relations in the contemporary world, both online and offline. The threat that Manosphere's communities pose to women and minority groups and its documented power to incite violence should not be underestimated. Future studies should investigate the topic from the demographic perspective including the social and political events that may enforce such groups.

Note

1. As Jones, Trott, and Wright (2019) note, "the subreddit r/MGTOW has grown from 54,000 members in early 2018 to 104,000 members in early 2019 and there are 32,859 members listed on one MGTOW forum" (2).

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Notes on contributors

Anna Maria Górska, is an Assistant Professor at Kozminski University, and a director of Women and Diversity in Organizations Research Center. Anna Górska specializes in gender and diversity in organizations and higher education institutions. Anna has participated as a principal investigator and researcher in multiple research grants funded by the Polish National Center of Science, EU funds and Norwegian Funds. She has also been awarded scholarships and awards, including Fulbright Junior Research Award. She has gained her international experience as a visiting scholar at Columbia Business School and ESCP Business School.

Karolina Kulicka is an independent scholar who currently works as a civil servant in Poland. She received her Ph.D. degree in global gender studies from the State University of New York at Buffalo. Her research focuses on gender and public policy. Kulicka is a recipient of multiple awards and scholarships, including the International Peace Scholarship, University at Buffalo Humanities Institute Fellowship, and Public Administration Theory Network Fellowship.

Dariusz Jemielniak is Full Professor and head of Management in Networked and Digital Environments (MINDS) department, Kozminski University, and faculty associate at Berkman-Klein Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University. His prior appointments include MIT (2015–2016, 2019-2020) University of California Berkeley (2007), and Cornell University (2004–2005). He is a corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. His recent books include Collaborative Society (2020, MIT Press, with A. Przegalinska), Thick Big Data (2020, Oxford University Press), Common Knowledge? An Ethnography of Wikipedia (2014, Stanford University Press). His current research projects include climate change denialism online, anti-vaxxer internet communities, and bot detection. He serves on the Board of Trustees of Wikimedia Foundation.

ORCID

Anna Maria Górska   http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3406-5454
Dariusz Jemielniak   http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3745-7931

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