"The Becoming of a Feminist Man". Transformation and Tension within Self-Representing Feminist and Feminist Behaving Men on YouTube: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

The rise of the manosphere and its infectious online influence drives the urgent need to leverage alternative means of influencing young people who navigated the internet. This research seeks to offer a first critical conceptualization of feminist men on online platforms, by looking at the most popular video portal: YouTube. Men, withholding the majority of resources, are a crucial strategic agent in advancing the feminist movement. There has been past research on feminist formations by men in the 1970s and on biased perceptions of feminist men, but not how other manifestations of feminism formed by men may take place online. With a feminist critical discourse analysis, speeches of feminist males on TED-Talk and feminist content creators are dissected. After applying a thematic analysis, the paper offers a framework describing the features that male feminists employ to communicate feminist perspectives to their audience. The paper finds that in contrast to male feminists efforts to specifically recruit men for feminism, this is usually negatively received. Future implications will be discussed.

Keywords: male feminism, men in feminism, YouTube, feminist discourse analysis, comment analysis, role modeling, TED-Talk

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1. Introduction

This research took place against the backdrop of the recent arrest of Andrew Tate for rape and human trafficking (Write & Murphey, 2022). Andrew Tate was an internet influencer who employed platforms such as YouTube and TikTok to spread homophobic and misogynistic ideas (Ghiasi, 2023). His contents mainly consisted of teaching his followers to achieve goals and develop behavior that align with hegemonic masculine values, toxic masculinity and sexist views (Sjödin & Olsson, 2023). As of the 19th of August 2022, Tate had a follower count of 4.6 million on instagram, 740.000 subscribers on YouTube, videos that have been viewed more than a million times on TikTok, and clips and images of him are still circulating throughout the internet (Holpuch, 2022). This is indicative of a sphere of influence on Instagram, TikTok and Twitter that goes beyond Tates´s followers, and affects a broad range of people who happen to browse social media. His popularity led me to infer that there is a great demographic of young men currently searching for someone who represents their views, helps them or presents some kind of strong role model function. In fact, it was found that Tates' viewers mainly consisted of young men who currently find themselves in an "identity building phase" (Lawson, 2022). This underlines a significant susceptibility of young men to the ideas of content creators such as Andrew Tate and many other influencers with similar footstanding, ranging from Russel Hartley, Sneako, Jordan Peterson, and Joe Rogan to Matt Walsh, making the manosphere thrive. The purpose of this paper was to explore the opportunity of an alternative form of role modeling aimed at this demographic of young men, by looking at men that either represent themselves as feminists, or voice feminist goals on the digital mega-platform YouTube. This can be seen as particularly important as the recent arrest has sparked a renewed outrage among men that already

perceive themselves to be discriminated against or censored, possibly pushing them more into extremist bubbles (Cannito et al., 2021).

The importance of looking at feminist men lies in the fact that men, in possession of the majority of resources, are crucial gatekeepers for fundamental reforms to advance the feminist movement (Connell, 2005). Moreover, there is an incentive to leverage male peer to peer learning on feminist ideas, as women have taken on a disproportionate burden on explaining feminist concepts to men, which at times can be intrusive given the structural power dynamics between those genders and the intimate nature of some feminist topics.

Despite the debate about men´s role in feminism, sometimes also referred to as the "men question" (Zalewski & Parpart, 2019; Holmgren & Hearn, 2009), international institutions market modern feminism as something that is inclusive to all, and welcome men as participatory agents of change for gender equality (UN Women, 2022). Given these societal discourses, it was of crucial importance to investigate existing contributions by male feminists to assess to which degree these international aims can be realized. Hence, this research focused on the realizability of male participation as an alternative influence to the manosphere on YouTube, with the overall aim to increase the effectiveness and strength of feminist efforts, and wellbeing for all.

While there has been some research on men in feminism, there was a gap in exploring the opportunities for more feminist influence by men and the feminist dialogue between men specifically on YouTube. In an era in which online spaces become increasingly important, the paper investigated the potential for feminist influence on men that move in the digital space through conducting a critical discourse analysis. The potential of feminist influence by males was assessed through looking at the discourse structures between men on the internet proclaiming to hold feminist views, and their YouTube commenters. Through conducting a

critical discourse analysis, this research was also able to reveal a deeper understanding of how male feminists contribute to broader narratives of the patriarchy[1], male feminism, power structures and gender equality. After having offered a brief literature review, my methodology was explained following an overview of the results and the discussion of these. This paper concluded with offering a first conceptualization of how feminist perspectives are shared and received by males on YouTube.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Men and the Manosphere

I theorized that a conglomeration of discourses has created an environment for men to be especially susceptible to "alpha males", the manosphere and incel fandoms (misogynistic online group formation pivoting around involuntary celibacy), which explains phenomena such as Andrew Tate´s popularity. I intended on briefly dismantling these components in the following section, and lay the background of this research, consequently lending credence to the importance of this research.

It has been pointed out that men have always made up the majority of the users of the internet (Morahan-Martin, 1998; Zimmermann et al., 2020). Especially, 16 to 20 year old participants stated a higher usage intensity of YouTube compared to other age groups (Zimmermann et al., 2020). Thus meaning that it is logical to suppose that this has led to the creation of an environment that is conducive to the formation of male-dominated groups online. Certain developments young men have been exposed to, such as the 2000-2010 discourse proclaiming a "boy crisis" (Okopny, 2008), have shaped the nature of these groups. This popular discourse brought forth claims, such as inherent biological differences between men and women, when referring to women excelling in educational institutions. In line with this thought, journalists have promulgated a so-called "war on boys" in schools and a "decline of males" in

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[1] Patriarchy: A system of male domination and power relationships that subjugates women (Millet, 1969).

the public sphere (Sommers, 2001; Tiger, 2000). This phenomena referred to the pattern of young working class men´s decreased likelihood to move into professional occupations and instead often finding employment in lower paying manual work due to social and cultural attributes that are said to be missing among that demographic (Tarrant, 2015). Tarrant argued that these young men are portrayed as amoral, and moreover as a cultural, physical and social threat to a modern society (2015). Most scholars have proven the "boy crisis" to be unsubstantiated and a so-called "aggrieved entitlement" reaction (Okopny, 2008; Kimmel, 2013). Aggrieved entitlement referred to the belief amongst users that they were imperiled by cultural injustices, combined with a felt sense of emasculation which prompted an expressed desire amongst some users to avenge for this perceived unfairness (Kimmel, 2013). Messner, on the other hand, agreed that there has been "a decline of men" and reasoned this in neoliberalism and deindustrialization forces instead of men´s self-victimization narrative claiming to live in a society that "favors women" (Messner 2016; Ging, 2019). Despite these findings, men who were the most affected by the repercussions of these discourses tend to not make the connection to a wider broken socio-political system. This led to improved conditions for joining online group formations such as the men's right movements (Messner, 2016). According to men's rights activists, the women's movement has achieved their goals while in absence of a men's movement, it is now men´s turn to achieve their goals (Messner, 2016), presenting a commonly employed argument to undermine efforts of gender inclusion (Gotell & Dutton, 2016).

A variable that further formented the growth of misogynistic online communities were high rates of men's mental health issues. Internal surveys conducted on incel forums showed that 74.1% of respondents suffered from anxiety and 67.5% from depression, and are likely living with either a diagnosed (34%) or undiagnosed (24%) mental health condition (Costello et al.,

2022). These statistics are important as the all pervading men's rights rhetoric on the internet that promotes an implicit anti‑feminism "is likely to resonate with those who feel insecure or embattled" (Messner, 2016).

One of the explanations typically offered for these high percentages are the low rates of men seeking mental health treatment (Harris, 2021; Chatmon, 2020). Men´s negative mental health can be attributed to several factors, however, the patriarchal constructs associated with men´s negative mental health outcomes are of particular importance to this research. One of them is the concept of hegemonic masculinity that entails not only a set of role expectations, but also a pattern of practice, such as: being the breadwinner, appearing strong and competitive and so forth, which enables men's domination over women in society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell, 2017). More importantly, hegemonic masculinity asserts the most honorable way of being a man and thereby sets a scale on which it is required of men to place themselves in relation to the perfect ideal of this "manhood". The pre-existence of such scale lays the groundwork for the development of the manosphere, inceldom, and the growth of personas such as Andrew Tate. This concept is closely interlinked to the idea of precarious manhood, in which manhood is widely viewed as a social status that must be earned and maintained through publicly verifiable actions (Vandello et al., 2008). Because of this, men can experience anxiety over their gender status, particularly when it is uncertain or challenged (Vandello et al., 2008). It is clear that feminism and notions of gender equality have repeatedly challenged, in particular the male gender status, escalating the gender insecurities of young working class men (Connell, 1995).

Surmising from the above, I infer that men today find themselves in a net of interacting discourses that increasingly encourage harmful fan-behavior of prominent criminals such as Andrew Tate and other self-proclaimed "alpha males". This net of social discourses and

patriarchal constructs, has created an environment in which men are especially susceptible to the manosphere and incel fandoms.

The relevance of discussing the manosphere in this paper lies in the fact that its practiced misogyny has proven to normalize violence against women (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016). The manosphere´s strategy to set up feminists as villains, and men as victims, is used as justification for the networked harassment that often emerges from the manosphere (Marwick & Caplan, 2018). In fact, the manosphere is presented as the main contributor for gendered online-harm and online harassment (Marwick & Caplan, 2018; Gotell & Dutton, 2016). Henceforth there is an urgent need to explore opportunities in enhancing alternative forms of (counter-)influences on YouTube.

2.2 A Historical Perspective of Men in Feminism

One of the most famous accounts that positioned men in the feminist movement is Bell Hooks´ book *"The will to change: Men, Masculinity and Love",* in which she argues that feminism must acknowledge the ways in which the denial of vulnerability by the patriarchy perpetuates a cycle of violence within men, obfuscating their true selves (Hooks, 2004). In continuation of this thought, Emma Watson invited men to the fight against patriarchy in her famous speech at the United Nations headquarters in 2014, consolidating the perspective that feminism is a movement for and by all (Puspita & Antoni, 2019).

However, men's relationship with feminism has been a contested one. Men's reaction to feminism has varied between hostility, sarcastic ridicule, to indifference, grudging sympathy, to some limited enthusiastic support (Kimmel, 1987; Messner, 1997). In light of increasing awareness of feminism, the question about the role of men has regained interest (Simões, Amaral & Santos, 2021). Debates about the role of men in transforming the patriarchy date back to the

1970s when the concept of hegemonic masculinity was discussed (Connell, 2013). Back then

Alice Jardine and Paul Smith state that men´s role to feminism presents an impossibility:

"Men are representatives in, carriers of the patriarchal mode; and [a man´s] desire to be a subject there too in

feminism— to be a feminist— is then only also the last feint in the long history of their colonization." (Jardine &

Smith, 2013, p.1).

Other voices, on the other hand, have stressed the potential of men being important allies to

achieve gender equality, as they can increase the collective action potential of feminism and the

opportunity for men to strategically use their more powerful status to disrupt problematic gender

roles (Tarrant, 2009; Silver, Chadwick & Anders, 2019; Un Women, 2022).

 Despite opposing opinions, some men in the 1970s did have an active role in supporting the

feminist movement by establishing a "men's liberation movement" that aimed at dissecting

men´s own oppressive biases and the ways in which men suffer from the patriarchy as well

(Messner, 2016; Pleck, 1977). While the "men´s liberation movement" in the 1970s carried a lot

of potential, Messner argues that its failure was already pre-determined as it was inherently

contradictory, and contained different parties that ended up separating themselves into what was

later known as the profeminist (or "anti‑sexist") men's movement and the anti-feminist men's

rights groups we find today. Understanding the history of men´s confrontation with feminism

provides a better understanding of how the current (anti-)feminism groups that circulate on the

internet now came to exist and will prove pertinent to later findings. Messner illustrates that men

in the 1970s, 80s moved within a limited field of structured options to respond to feminism;

"[Men can] attempt a U‑turn and retreat toward an idealized past of male entitlement; turn right

and join a backlash against feminism; or bend left and actively support feminism" (Messner,

2016, p.7). I argue that men today are still confronted with these choices. This research will focus on men that choose to support feminism and investigate their potential for presenting an alternative role model and feminist influence to young men.

2.3 Feminist Men Today

Men´s involvement in feminism takes place in a different context now. Both feminist activists and non-activists have employed their agency in a space that has partly already transformed in a society that professionalized and institutionalized feminism (Messner, 2016), contributing to an image that second wave feminism was successful. The rapid disappearance of the initial men's liberation movement rendered feminist men in the public sphere relatively invisible throughout third wave feminism, however, there are some observations to make in which men attempted to support feminist goals. One famous account of men actively involving themselves in feminist goals is the "walk a mile in her shoes" campaign, an international men's march for women that has taken place annually since 2001. The march aimed at raising awareness of gender-based and sexual violence by walking the distance of a mile wearing high heels (Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, n.d.). On a more institutional level, the United Nations launched a #HeforShe campaign in 2014, and published a report portraying men as "critical actors" and "allies", highlighting the need for men to actively commit to change in the institutions that they lead (HeforShe, n.d.).

In the following section, I want to provide a brief overview of the research conducted so far on feminist men. Research on feminist men is diverse and complex. When diving deeper into it, it becomes clear that being a male feminist has its own challenges, possibly prohibiting men from adopting a feminist label. A pattern is revealed that suggests a biased conception of men that are actively feminist. It is suggested that feminist men have many close female friends,

engage in cross-dressing, are more feminine in appearance, are more likely to be gay and are perceived to be less sexually attractive than non-feminist men (Anderson, 2009; Twenge & Zucker, 1999). Hence creating an image that supposedly does not conform to stereotypical, traditionally "masculine" behaviors and values. Other research has supported these findings by discussing an asymmetrical perception, in which commonly female feminists are viewed as more manly and feminist men as more feminine (Gundersen & Kunst, 2019). It is inferred that feminist self-identification carries social considerations and risks of stigmatization among men, especially as the loss of a traditional masculine image often correlates with perceived men's social status (Vandello et al., 2008), which is in accordance with the precarious manhood theory. These findings highlight the importance of investigating how contemporary feminist men have overcome this barrier by dissecting their online self-representations.

Scholars have also been interested in researching men that move within an indecisive space of becoming or not becoming feminists. Results showed that unsure men were more like feminists for some components of masculinity and more like non-feminists for others (Silver, Chadwick & Anders, 2019). All men were equally invested in a sexual partner's pleasure, but unsure men and feminist men were less concerned with receiving sexual favors in exchange compared to non-feminists (Silver, Chadwick & Anders, 2019). This research highlighted the potential of indecisive men when guided by feminist content online. Increasing men´s participation in feminism has been previously attempted by Elle UK magazine's 2014: Feminism Issue, presenting women and men wearing t-shirts stating "this is what a feminist looks like". Positive portrayals such as these have proven to increase men's solidarity with the feminist movement and intentions to engage in feminist activism (Wiley et al., 2013). Men who read the positive portrayal article expressed more solidarity with feminists and greater intentions to

engage in collective action in support of women, than men who read either feminism articles that contain an objective or the negative portrayal (Silver, Chadwick & Anders, 2019).

Another intersectional case is the continual attempt to increase men´s professional action in gender fields, which, while risky, also exhibits certain promises (Messner, Greenberg & Peretz, 2015). This was exemplified with the increased professional involvement of young men of color with boys on topics regarding gang and substance abuse issues. This amounted to greater participation in college internships, and then paid jobs in non‑profit organizations related to gender issues, leading to a greater number of young men of color working in the field of the prevention of gender-based violence. Messner has termed this "the progressive potential of the rise of organic intersectionality" (2016). I infer from this case that men´s feminism can take the form of men mentoring other men, which I seek to further investigate within this research.

2.4 Role Model structures among men

There is a need for a deeper examination of the structures between and among men when it comes to gender-related issues. Scholars have claimed to be "frustrated by an object feminism becoming the stakes in a displaced rivalry between men because of a refusal by men to examine the structure of the relations between themselves" (Jardine & Smith, 2013, p.2). One way in which the development of male political intentions can be targeted, within the structures among themselves, is through role models. Role models are often suggested as a way of motivating individuals to set and achieve ambitious goals (Morgenroth, Ryan & Peters, 2015). Role models have three distinct functions: (a) acting as behavioral models, (b) representing the possible, and (c) being inspirational (Morgenroth, Ryan & Peters, 2015). The aforementioned paragraphs make it clear that men face barriers when attempting to follow feminist thought, therefore role model

theory could prove pivotal in demonstrating that a potential goal is attainable, despite the challenges as elaborated above.

This provides an incentive to scrutinize the effectiveness of male role models through looking at which type of role model men would listen to. In a 2008 study in New Zealand, they found that school principals were favored who exhibited a hegemonic masculinity including heterosexual, rugby-playing and 'real men' attributes (Cushman, 2008). A study in England continued this research by critically exploring a broader set of characteristics for the ideal role model for 0-8 years old boys (Brownhill, 2014). Qualities that were identified were being a good listener, trustworthy, fair and honest. Through qualitative analysis, the research rightly points out that ideal characteristics are context dependent.

Similar research has been done on the gendered role model effect of influencer marketing on the social media plattform Instagram. Results found that men did not identify more with male than female role models, but were more motivated by same-sex (compared to opposite-sex) role models (Hudders & De Jans, 2022). This stresses the potential of male to male feminist peer learning. Moreover, as found by Schouten and colleagues, recipients tend to identify and trust influencers more compared to celebrities (2020). This will be an interesting finding to compare to this research, as YouTube content creators find themselves on the spectrum between being "nobody", influencers and celebrities.

2.5 Gendered YouTube and Feminist Men

Over the years, social media sites have transformed into one of the most important channels for users to connect and communicate with one-another (Aichner et al., 2021). YouTube is currently the most popular online video website that reaches more than two billion clicks everyday (Szostak, 2014; Citgez et al., 2022). YouTube offers the opportunity for any private

person to create their own identity, style of channel, to document their everyday lives, like

vloggers do, or to post other so-coined "amateur-videos" (Godwin-Jones, 2007). YouTube has

been of frequent use to academia by scrutinizing various facets of the site, most frequently the

interaction patterns (Lee et al., 2010) or contents (Potthast, Stein & Becker, 2010; Potthast, 2009)

of the comment sections. Thelwall states that YouTube data has value in providing a new means

of measuring public responses to local or international events or issues (2014). Furthermore,

YouTube holds a crucial position as research found that users have 6.3% chance of being

suggested an incel-related video by YouTube's recommendation algorithm within five hops when

starting from a non-incel-related video, and therefore potentially contributes to

online-radicalization (Papadamou et al., 2021). YouTube also holds a crucial position in the

regard that the feminism presented is accessible to almost everyone, as structural biases,

intentionally or habitually created social norms, can otherwise prevent men from acquiring a

feminist mindset. This was demonstrated by a research by Quinlan and Bute, exemplifying how

males are excluded from sexual health seminars, attributing it to be a "women's issue" (2013).

The research intersection between men, feminism and YouTube has often been conducted

by feminist media studies, or by looking at feminist or anti-feminist identity formation on

YouTube (Lin, 2017; Döring & Mohseni, 2019). It was found that feminist YouTube contents

received much more negative (hostile and sexist) commentaries than those who did not (Döring

& Mohseni, 2019). Other scholars have also attempted feminist critical discourse analysis on

Youtube, for e.g. analyzing #metoo vlogs (Almanssori & Stanley, 2022) or the new digital left in

a so-called "LeftTube" sphere (Saarela, 2020). For instance, Saarela discovered that Left-Tube is

used as a social strategy by which men have the opportunity to engage in an emancipatory

project and social transformation in which their own struggle and interests are acknowledged

(2020). This research showcased that YouTubers were responsible for shifting men´s antagonized leftist feminist critical perspective to convincing alternatives to social problems. Referring to previously mentioned role model functions, Saarela´s research additionally proved that a positive interactive role-model influence is existent online, by revealing qualitative responses of content creators; "Your videos helped me make a better person" (Saarela, 2020, p. 61). This quote further demonstrates the impactful potential that content creators on YouTube carry. I infer that Saarela´s research indicates the existence of a group of men on the internet that is interested in alternatives to a growing right winged and sexist manosphere in answering gender-related issues. Given YouTube´s male dominance so far, it stresses men´s potential and responsibility in such an environment.

3. Methodology

In summary, the literature review empathized the importance of online spaces in current times, as well as the male dominance within them and the rise of a harmful manosphere, the potential of male peer learning and the value of already established critical feminist discourse. It is deduced that there is a gap in the examination of feminist conversations among men in the online sphere, and the need to leverage the feminist influence exerted by men.

On the basis of the conducted literature review, my research question emerged:

1. How are male feminist perspectives shared and received on the YouTube platform?

   a. Which discourses surrounding male feminism are revealed and what does it imply for existing power structures and the recruitment of men for feminism?

This research question enabled me to scrutinize how male feminist communicate their feminist stances to the audience, and how the audience responds accordingly. The video output and the comment section present the main form of conversation and interaction on YouTube.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse is a form of social action that holds the power to shape phenomena around us, policies, shut downs, pop ups, events and media appearances, as well as provides its producer with the power to define ideas (Irigaray, 1985). Social power of groups and institutions is defined as means of control, through being able to control the acts and minds of members of other groups, may take form through integrated laws, rules, norms, habits or consensus (Van Dijk, 2015).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an inter- and multidisciplinary method and social movement by which power relations are dissected to understand the subjective realities that are presupposed, with the overall aim of challenging social inequalities (Breeze, 2011; Lazar, 2007; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013). CDA attempts to encompass discourse analysis in its limits and scope by incorporating social perspectives and theories coming from other fields. Rather than solely describing discourse structures, it tries to explain them in terms of properties of social interaction and especially social structure (Van Dijk, 1997). This is achieved by giving room to ask why these discourses are happening, through repeatedly zooming to the macro level when analyzing e.g. the placement of text, rhetorical devices used, definitions, syntax or word choices. Social power also may be enacted by properties such as social style between speaker and recipients, morphology, lexicon, pronouns, syntax and lexicons, metaphors, storytelling, conversation (Van Dijk, 1989; Fairclough, 1989). CDA yields at bridging the gap between micro (language use, verbal interaction, communication) and macro level of analysis of social order (e.g. inequality between groups) (Van Dijk, 1989). Adding the component of feminism in this analysis implies that special attention will be put to gendered assumptions in hegemonic power relations, and how they are discursively produced, sustained and negotiated (Lazar, 2007). A

feminist lens carries its significance by uncovering the ways in which individuals still suffer

from a patriarchal system that entrenches the institutional, cultural, social and individual level

affecting everyday life (Connell, 2005).

3.2 Research Design

This interpretivist research follows an inductive and exploratory approach to provide the

flexibility needed for a novel, exceptionist research topic such as this one. Literature review has

been conducted by utilizing search engines such as Google Scholar, SmartCat, Research Rabbit

and Research pub.

In light of the presented background, the most adequate way forward was applying a

critical feminist discourse analysis on YouTube. The method of discourse analysis assesses how

the social world, expressed through language, is affected by various sources of power (Waitt,

2005). Specifically multimodal discourse analysis enabled me to harness various semiotic modes

in a discourse to determine wanted discourse structures. I achieved this by looking at several

discourse properties, such as appearance, language use and proclaimed content by the producer,

and lastly the responses in the comment section in order to carve out representational, interactive

and textual meanings (Waitt, 2005). This technique allowed me to analyze how different

elements interact with each other to form a complete discourse. This method served research

aims by its nature of exposing the larger forces of power structures affecting the perceptions,

attitudes and relationships surrounding feminist men on YouTube (Waitt, 2005).

Aside from the scientific importance outlined in the literature review, the platform

YouTube was chosen for the strategic advantage of capturing reactions to portrayed contents in

"real time" and over a prolonged period, as compared to more traditional sources of public

opinion. In addition, the responses are already in the public domain which implies a decreased

risk of ethical issues associated with their collection and analysis. This method of data-collection was less obtrusive, not necessitating people to make time to complete a survey or an interview. It also allowed me to understand the population in a dynamic manner through the way in which users replied to each other, revealing the nature of interaction being, for instance, welcoming or antagonistic.

3.3 Data Collection

In order to explore the grand YouTube data-base comprehensively and effectively for target videos, I made use of a group of keywords that can be viewed in Appendix A. Additionally, in a snowball manner, I instrumentalized comments to infer more potential useful keywords to reach a proper saturation of diverse target videos. In total 13 videos were selected. Videos selected were set to have a minimum of 5.000 views and a minimum of 100 comments, by which the first 100 comments were selected for coding practices. These parameters were chosen to ensure that content creators owned a platform that had significant enough influence. The YouTube videos selected were published between from 2010 and 2023 with a minimum length of three and a maximum length of 30 minutes.

When I first investigated the YouTube database with keywords indicated in Appendix A, a spectrum of feminist and anti-feminist content appeared. The majority of men speaking about feminist subjects are found on the channel "TED-Talks", a knowledge sharing platform. More individual content creators sharing feminist perspectives were only rarely found after further scrolling downwards in the search results. While choosing the YouTube videos to analyze, I came across a spectrum of male content creators, raising the question of who is eligible for this research, more precisely what constitutes a feminist?

I do not aim to give an ultimate response to what constitutes a feminist man, however, I aim at outlining the chosen feminist profile that dictated the selection of the videos for this research. For analysis, I chose men that fell into the following criterions: A) Acknowledgment of a gender hierarchal society, involving the recognition of male privilege in social life, B) Demonstrates reflexivity, C) Demonstrates nuanced understanding of feminist ideology, D) Derives his speech from an ideological standpoint, not merely factual, E) Includes in his speech a normative incentive to a) change worldviews, b) to take action, c) to take on feminist identity or d) personally reflect on one's own standing in relation to the gender hierarchy.

These criterions were selected with the research aim in mind and might differ for other research. Some videos that did not fulfill all criterions were selected nevertheless, in order to get acquainted with the overall existing contributions and to leave room for flexibility. The selected videos presented individuals from different age groups, with varying physical appearance in relation to hegemonic standards of masculinity, with academic and non academic backgrounds, and personas with and without celebrity status. Feminist advocacy as outlined by the above criterions was barely found among men on YouTube, aside from arranged speeches on TED-Talk. Hence, this is my major source for inspection. Other content creators, who contributed to the aim of gender equality by holding conversations with audiences particularly in the support of or in the defense of women were selected for further inspiration.

3.4 Data Analysis

Transcripts of the videos and comment threads were extracted for the purpose of open coding practices (Khandkar, 2009) by making use of the research application Atlas.ti. The application simplified the process of line by line coding (Khandkar, 2009) and provided a thorough exploration of the data, considering the different opportunities such as word clouds.

Thematic analysis was applied to let codes dictate possible emerging themes that can be summarized later in a handful of discourses (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

4. Ethical Implications

The research complies with the codex of ethical research, which is further defined by the respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These norms imply that the participants' welfare is prioritized over the interest of society while the research is conducted fairly and in a non-exploitative way. The method of critical feminist discourse analysis exhibits fewer ethical considerations as used data has been already chosen to be published in the public domain. In order to prevent bias, peer review has been repeatedly conducted by other academics from diverse backgrounds and feedback has been provided. I further informed myself about different perspectives on feminist theories and was attentive to cite authors from different backgrounds. Considering that the target group of this research are feminist and non-feminist men, I selected non-male authors as well as male authors writing about their experience with feminism. Likewise, when especially appropriate, efforts were made to represent a female viewpoint to keep strengthening women's voices in a paper that puts its focus on men. It is also of importance to mention that when referred to men in this research, it is acknowledged that men do not present a homogenous group and have differing stances and experiences, while still recognizing that they are part of upholding a system of oppressive structures.

5. Positionality

I acknowledge the limits of my own positionality through being a white, heterosexual, middle-class female, born and raised in the Global North. This greatly influences my experiences with feminism and my feminist perspectives. My personal perception places special importance during the analysis and evaluation of the discourses, such as coding and the interpretive freedom

that is associated with it as well as the previous selection of videos in the first place. Another consideration is my language capability, which coerces me to exclude videos and voices that are not German or English speaking, indirectly enforcing hegemonic standards. The research is therefore conducted within these previously delineated remits. Thus, I offer these findings as only one possible interpretation of these online discourses.

6. Findings

This research aimed at finding out how feminist perspectives are shared and received by men on YouTube. In order to offer a more in-depth account of patterns identified, this result section is separated in two parts; One that discusses the discourses found within the feminist perspectives shared by feminist men, and the other, the discourses within the reception of these perspectives in the comment section. The most striking trends discovered in the first are; fighting with a paradoxical position, male suffering as inroads to feminism, standing up for women versus for men, and catering to men through a masculinization of messages. Among the recipients a delegitimization-, comfort- and critical engaging discourse was found.

6.1 The Messenger: Discourses in the Speech of Men sharing Feminist Perspectives

The model below provides an overview of the findings of men sharing their feminist perspectives. In the following, I provide a more in-depth elaboration on four trends with the guidance of this model. These trends were discovered across and within the elements displayed in the framework. Due to the limited scope of this research, only the most relevant trends were explained. All elements portrayed in this framework lay a structure and inspiration for future research. A more detailed explanation of each element in the framework can be found in the Appendix C.
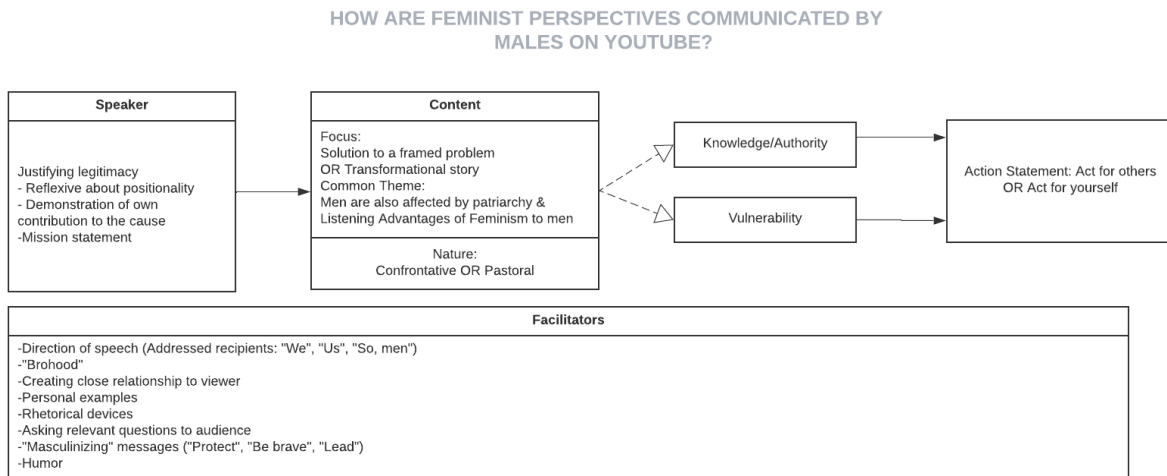
Speaker	Content		Knowledge/Authority	Action Statement: Act for others OR Act for yourself
Justifying legitimacy - Reflexive about positionality - Demonstration of own contribution to the cause -Mission statement	Focus: Solution to a framed problem OR Transformational story Common Theme: Men are also affected by patriarchy & Listening Advantages of Feminism to men			
	Nature: Confrontative OR Pastoral		Vulnerability	

Facilitators

-Direction of speech (Addressed recipients: "We", "Us", "So, men")
-"Brohood"
-Creating close relationship to viewer
-Personal examples
-Rhetorical devices
-Asking relevant questions to audience
-"Masculinizing" messages ("Protect", "Be brave", "Lead")
-Humor

Figure 1: How are feminist perspectives communicated by males on YouTube?

Description: The steps in this model were presented from right to left however do not need to appear in the same order in every video investigated. This framework maps out core elements containing themes identified in each speech. The speaker, as the messenger in this analysis, is presented as an element of analysis in itself as well as the content portrayed. The feminist content shared by the messenger has to be translated in a convincing manner into varying calls for action. This can be mediated by a dual pathway that presents two modes of convincing the audience to conform to the action statement. The process of convincing the recipient of the message can either take form through demonstrating authority and expertise or through showcasing own vulnerability and hence making it increasingly relatableness to the audience. Facilitators are listed as a range of techniques and strategies employed that assist the messengers´aim. This framework is a simplified version of the observations of feminist men.

6.1.1 Fighting With a Paradoxical Position

The first trend to discuss is the observation of men attempting to deal with a paradoxical position. Within the speaker element of the framework above, it became clear that men repeatedly experienced the need to justify their speech, as they were self-aware about the

uncommon nature of men expressing feminist aspirations. This took shape through reflecting on their positionality and expressing frequent mission statements to demonstrate their own commitment to the cause.

1. **Positionality**

A significant observation is the speaker's reflexivity about their own identity whilst holding the speech. This appears to be crucial, as speakers have to demonstrate and convince the audience that they are an "authentic and sincere" feminist. The trend of male feminists justifying their speech follows logically from the prominent risk men present to the feminist movement and the ongoing scrutiny they are suspected to by default among feminists. Distrust is a vital mechanism to ensure that feminist efforts are not to no avail and to avoid adaptive behavior of the oppressor that reinforces patriarchal structures. Indeed, feminist men find themselves in a space of ambiguity while advocating for feminist goals, as they are inherently part of the oppressor demographic. Speaker 2 exemplifies:*"Now I realize that's what we might call the kind of inescapable irony of being me. I leveraged my presumed authority as a man to argue that that system that gives me that authority is very dangerous"*. The reflexive position the messenger occupied took form in subtle and direct approaches. In most cases, the messengers reflected upon their own positionality, such as speaker 6 who stated: *"I have had a great blessing as a former president, because I have had an access that very few other people in the world have ever had"*. Or speaker 3 clarifying that he is *"Actually, here speaking as a middle class, white man."* Other YouTube creators have reflected upon their gender and their profession impacting their capability to judge: "*I'm not a woman, so I'm not ever going to truly understand what it's like to be a woman. Thankfully, I have a profession in which it is my job to try to understand people's experiences that are different from what are my own"* (Speaker 8).

2. Positionality in comparison to females

Some of these statements stress the difference the speakers experienced while advocating feminist goals as men in comparison to women. Speaker 5, for instance, states: *"Am I man enough to just shut the hell up and listen? (Applause). I've got to be honest. I wish that I didn't get an applause."*, alluding to the trend that men are disproportionately praised when speaking out while women are dismissed as biased or crazy, while it should be seen as something "self-explanatory". Speaker 3 further exemplifies this by sharing his experience when working as a teacher; "*whenever my [female] colleague opened her mouth,(...) they'd say, (...) ´You're a woman. You're biased.` When I say it, they go, "Wow, is that interesting."* Speaker 1 surmises this: *"Oftentimes men like myself get a lot of credit and public acclaim for doing the work that women have been doing for a long time."*

3. Mission statement

These behavioral tendencies were emphasized with the speaker's own "mission statement" in relation to feminism, outlining their personal aims, contributing to the audience's understanding of the type of person they are listening to as shown in Appendix C. Positionality and the mission statement can be interlinked, as one messenger demonstrates; *"That's probably the most important part of my job, to be a man who stands up and repeats those terms ´radical feminist critique of patriarchy´ as often as possible until people stop being afraid of those terms"* (Speaker 2).

6.1.2 Male Suffering as Inroads to Feminism

A common theme among the videos was the speaker's intention to make men realize the ways patriarchy and feminism is relevant to men. Feminism is represented as a savior trope that will lift men from a collective "suffering". This communicated through a positive transformation

the speaker underwent. This trend gave indication on male motivation behind joining the feminist movement.

1. Transformation

A feature apparent across most content was the account of a personal transformation story that narrates the speaker becoming a feminist. Several speakers claimed to have experienced a tension with the predominant idea of masculinity - a *"misfit"* profile- which initiated their encounter with feminism. Speaker 1 exemplifies; *"I realized that I was living in a state of conflict, conflict with who I feel I am at my core and conflict with who the world tells me as a man I should be."*

Often narrated is a transformation process with a departure from one state to the arrival of another, showcasing the speaker's own process of becoming feminist; *"In the first half of my life I struggled to be a normal guy, to be a real man. In the second half of my life I gave that up and things worked out much better because of an unexpected encounter with a radical feminist writing that critiqued patriarchy"* (Speaker 2). This storytelling feature is based on what speaker 2 coined *"the evidence of [their] own life"*.

2. A Common Theme: Men suffer from the Patriarchy

A common thread in the transformational stories as well in speeches that focussed on a more factual account was identified as the fact that patriarchy affects men too. Messengers stress that *"gender equality is also in our interest as men"* and that feminism will enable men *"for the first time to be free",* and as a *"movement that affects in a positive way, not just women and girls, but also men and boys"* (Speaker 3, 4). Speaker 1 underlines this by a more concrete example; *"One of the things that really bothers me about some of the rhetoric against feminists (...) is that somehow they're anti-male. What about all the boys who are profoundly affected in a negative*

way by what some adult man is doing against their mother, themselves, their sisters? What about

all the young men and boys?". Often these statements are made to counter the assumption that

feminism is for and by women, misled by its word composition. (See Appendix C for more

concrete examples).

6.1.3 Standing up for Women versus for Men

In the framework I put forward an observation about the nature of the content which

revealed another discourse. When the nature was pastoral the speaker was focussing more on the

recruitment of men, while when confrontative speakers the focus was put on standing up for the

affected.

1. **Nature of Content: Pastoral or Confrontative**

I coined one pattern that arose "pastoral care", which refers to how some content creators

acknowledge their male audience's potential emotional reception. Speaker 2 for instance ensures:

"Now, men (...), I'm not saying there's anything inherently wrong with you or me, I'm not saying

we have to stop being men. But we need balance, right?". Or admitting that the proclaimed

actions aren't easy: *"I'm telling you it's not easy in male culture for guys to challenge each*

other" (Speaker 1), revealing a level of empathy and relatedness, framing himself as just *"a*

normal guy". Speaker 1 also communicates hope to the audience, demonstrating that the goal of

improved gender equality is attainable; *"I know we can do it, we can do better".*

While some feminist men focussed on a more pastoral approach, some others directly

called out men to stress their necessity of involvement in feminist issues; *"The average man that*

might say, I'm against the abuse of women and girls quietly accepts the privileged position that

[he] occupies" (Speaker 5). In some cases, the tone of voice is antagonistic by sarcastically

asking men who complain about the label feminism that they *"might need to reevaluate [their]*

priorities in this movement" (Speaker 4). Another illustration is a story that speaker 3 shares,

titled; *"A Black Woman Stole My Job",* explaining men´s sense of entitlement (to be viewed in

Appendix C). Speaker 12 on anti feminist memes stated:*"What you think doesn't matter, the fact*

that you don't find her attractive doesn't matter, the fact that she intimidates you because she is

more educated or because she makes more money doesn´t matter, that's your hang-up, not hers".

6.1.4 Catering to Men through a Masculinization of Messages

Within the element labeled facilitators in the framework, a trend I identified is the

reference to traits that are idealized by hegemonic masculinity, as a means to convince the

audience of the speaker´s goals. This implies that feminist speech was only able to distance itself

limitedly from the patriarchal influence.

1. **Masculinizing of Messages ("Protect", "Be brave", "Lead")**

An observation I made is that many of the speakers had the tendency to use

stereotypically perceived masculine traits to promote gender equality. A protection narrative is

perpetuated; *"[There are]so many situations where men in powerful positions failed to act to*

protect children, in this case, boys" (Speaker 1). This is concurrent with the framing of feminist

teachings as a father to son relationship; *"We owe it to women. There's no question about it. But*

we also owe it to our sons." (Speaker 3). In some instances masculine traits were strategically

turned around and put into an antithetical relationship, *"Are you brave enough to be vulnerable?*

(Speaker 2). But also reinforcing ideas about hegemonic masculinity in other instances, in which

the masculine is seen as the default;*"Because masculine men they're not afraid of independent*

women because they're not little boys"(Speaker 12). Another example presented by speaker 1, "*If*

you make [misogynistic] comments, you're failing at your leadership"(Speaker 1), referring to

the idea that men need to be leaders.

6.2 The Recipients: Discourses in the Comment Section

6.2.1 Delegitimization through the Re-perpetuation of Sexism and Homophobia

In the comment sections I identified a pattern of delegitimization of feminist ideas

through sexist, homophobic and dehumanizing comments.

In every video inspected, there were at least two comments dismissing the speaker as

"simp" or *"gay"*. These labels can be categorized within a greater discourse that feminizes the

male speaker. This can be considered a strategy harnessed by the commentators to gatekeep men

from joining the feminist movement. The recipients achieve this by changing the pronouns to

"she" and *"her"* when explicitly addressing the speaker. Aside from pointing out perceived

femininity of the speaker (*"Girly/Feminine man"*/*"This is what low testosterone looks like"*),

quotes have relied on memes, such as *"Wife's boyfriend recommended this video", "Soyboy",*

"Pure soy propaganda", in order to disqualify the thematics covered by the speaker.

Conclusively, collective statements are made;*"We're kicking you out of the male gender, you are*

not male anymore." Within this feminization trend, typically perceived feminine traits are

perceived as undesirable and lower in quality, reinforcing submissive gender role ideas; *"That*

douchebag also seems a little emotional"

Often ideas of hegemonic masculinity were reinforced: *"Here we are today. In this*

society with a bunch of bitches, soft times create soft men." In this view, women are reduced to a

trophy to be conquered in the form of a wife or girlfriend;*"She will become your roommate, not*

your wife". Feminist men are framed as desperate and unmanly individuals who share feminist

viewpoints to strategically flatter women and blindly strive for women's attention, *"Simp of the*

year award goes to [the speaker]" and *"Pov: 90% of the audience are females"*. As one speaker

observes, *"Sexual conquest is so often used as a gauge of manhood, or as a gauge of your sexual*

identity. You didn't sleep with her?! Well you must be gay!"

This feminization discourse is closely interlinked with homophobia by using typical employed insults against the queer community, *"What a boring little fruitcake",* or making amusive comments such as *" he[the speaker] dealt with being gay in an interesting way"* and *"Honestly, I think this guy is ready to transition [to a woman]".* On a broader scale, commentators effectively achieve ridicule of the queer movement.

Additionally, sexually dehumanizing words (*"cuck","cuckadoodledoo"*) are used to describe the speaker. Authority and intimidation are further exercised by making viewpoints seen as "natural" and self-explanatory: *"This is garbage and if you're a man you should know that".* Thereby, the commentator empowers sexist views by selling them as truth.

In general, the comment section creates a delegitimizing discourse through framing the speaker as not creditable. This is enacted by dismissing speakers as e.g. lunatic and clueless, especially when referring to speakers that seemed less confident in their speech or appeared particularly old. In this sense commentators commented on aspects unrelated to the content of the speech to make the speaker appear weak, such as calling the speaker thin or ascribing him having "*an extremely low IQ!".*

What the comment section also exposes is the demographic that makes reference to incel ideology and alpha male culture, as periodically speakers were coined "betas" or a *"pathetic gamma male".* Beta males refer to men tending to assume a passive or subservient role in social or professional situations, placing lowest on the male hierarchy, thus representing the state of manhood one should avoid in the alpha male hierarchy fantasy. Imperatives are enunciated to strengthen the effect of their words; *"Shut up beta male".*

Lastly, an aggrieved entitlement and victimization discourse is found when it comes to upholding sexist power structures; *"Just subscribe to ´Men are the reason for all evil´ done as simply as*

that" and *"Men are far more oppressed than women in the west. This guy is a bigot"*. Many times commentators reasoned feminism to be a movement that tries to accomplish the domination of women over men.

6.2.2 Comfort, Support and Gratitude

A less dominant discourse within the recipients is the frequent expression of gratefulness.. Additionally, commenters try to defend the speakers against the insulting majority of comments and share thoughts on the positive impact the video has made on them, alluding to a successful role model effect. Examples present; *"Wow, you really educated me with this. I was a bit sick of feminists"or* "*As a man, I love this video"*.

Among this discourse there can be a slight difference to be marked to a similar discourse, which I termed the comfort discourse and male feminism for women. Many comments seemed to experience a sense of comfort just by a man simply speaking up on this issue, regardless of the quality. *"You are an inspiring human being, thank you for inspiring me and giving me hope that good people do exist"*. A speaker explains: *"If I clearly signal that misogyny is bad, I think that the people who suffer from being on the receiving end will really appreciate that"*.

6.2.3 "We critically engage"

Another demographic, to map out within the comment section, can be distinguished as providing the speaker with constructive criticism. This can include information to improve the speaker's performance, sharing related information or engaging in a discussion about the contents addressed in the video. Among those one can find relevant skepticism from other feminists that derive from the risks that come with feminist topics being presented by men.

7. Discussion

This paper aimed at dissecting how feminist perspectives are shared and received by males in YouTube to investigate their potential for presenting an alternative sphere of influence to the predominant manosphere. In this discussion, I will first connect the findings to literature, then I will discuss the influence of the patriarchy in the results and at last address the discrepancy between the positive portrayals of the feminist men and the negative reception of the audience.

7.1 Situating Findings in Previous Literature

Against expectations, men with celebrity status yielded a more positive response in the comment section than individuals without celebrity status (Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020). Further, the findings affirm the negative association with the label "feminism", by which videos whose title contained the word "feminism" and videos that generally contained a higher frequency of "feminism" in the male speech, averagely faced a more negative reception than those with less (Döring & Mohseni, 2019). In line with previous literature is also the perception of feminist men as feminine and the erosion of status of the speaker among the general, but especially male audience (Anderson, 2009; Twenge & Zucker, 1999). Furthermore, given the pattern of self-ridicule and humor (more detailed in Appendix C), results also confirm Holmgren and Hearn´s research articulating the ways in which men can engage feminists, by stating that "Humorous self-criticism can work as a way to not make the suspicion [of being a male feminist] too pretentious and at the same time distance himself from other (pro)feminist men who overstate their importance" (Holmgren & Hearn, 2009, p. 409). Accordingly, response rates seemed to be the more positive the more humor was involved. Lastly, the freeing of patriarchy trope is justifiable as it has been shown that men who do assume a feminist identity, despite the potential consequences for their perceived masculine status, experience less stress to conform to

masculine norms -since masculine norms have been correlated with depression (Silver,

Chadwick & Anders, 2019).

7.2 Caught Within the Power Field of Patriarchy

Findings also affirm that the audience prefers real man traits as role models (Brownhill,

2014). The response of the commenters was more positive when the speaker was more closely

aligned with physical features that resembled hegemonic masculinity (buff, handsome, had a

reputation). This informs the need for men to comply with patriarchal constructs if they want to

achieve a higher success rate for their feminist message to be adopted. This is further

undergirded in the way the speaker adjusted his content to the male audience. The

masculinization of messages, the brotherhood language, the father-son discourse further feeds the

question established by Chowdhury and Baset, "To what extent can embodied men's

representation of women distance itself from masculinist speech?" (2015). Also, the fact that the

more explicitly feminism and structural issues were forwarded, the more negative the responses,

speaks for a skewed representation, whereby the ones most complicit with gender hierarchies are

the ones more positively viewed.

7.3 Addressing the Discrepancy

Striking is the discrepancy between the positive intentions feminist males shared and the

negative reception of those. The dominant negative reception of male feminists on YouTube

proved the previous outlined discussion, that male feminists face significant barriers. The

discursive observations found in the results showcase how the audience disempowered feminist

men by the very same sexist ideas about social gender roles and feminine traits that women were

suspect to. The findings framed feminism voiced by men as something that cannot be taken

seriously, and therefore reduced its power of influence. It led to the impression that men had to

excel (without any flaws) in bringing across their point to be not under attack. Moreover, poorly and uneducated men communicating feminism seemed to even feed the anti-feminist sentiment, and therefore had a contrary effect. Male feminism seemed to play into a pre-set up ridiculing game within the broader manosphere culture, providing misogynistic individuals with stronger incentive to dismiss feminist movement as ridiculous. It was identified that there are no intentions of taking the content seriously in the first place. This showed that feminist influence on YouTube by men does not carry much counter potential to the power of the manosphere as of yet. While this proved that male feminism online does not seem to be easy, it was perhaps not supposed to be. Sandra Harding explains,"A standpoint is not a perspective; it does not just flow spontaneously for the conditions of women's existence. It has to be *constantly* wrestled out against the hegemonic dominant ideologies that structure the practices of daily life".

Aside from the negative reception in the comments, the existence of feminist male content may itself be meaningful. As the comfort discourse proved, male feminist content might not be received well overall, but can induce hope for some viewers, getting reaffirmed that indeed diverse genders are at least attempting to stand up against the misogynistic online communities on YouTube. Additionally, the negative reception could even strengthen the virtue of feminist male content, as feminist content by males is still intentionally produced *despite* its prominent challenges, possibly sending a strong signal.

8. Limitations

Within this research, limitations needed to be acknowledged. First and foremost, the predominance of Western audiences and users influences my ability to make broad inferences. Burgess and Green argue that particularly YouTube is US-dominated demographically and culturally (2019), bearing the risk of a perpetuation of white feminism (Daniels, 2015).

Secondly, the assessment to what degree feminism shared by men on YouTube poses alternative influence to the manosphere, can not be adequately addressed. While recipient observations were made, there can be no clear distinction between the reactions of different genders to the feminist content displayed, given the anonymous nature of digital identities. More importantly, recipients' ideologies, opinions and views are also largely shaped by outside factors (family upbringing, peers etc.), so that the online content displayed only can have a limited influence on the viewer. Following this thought, YouTube´s algorithmic mechanisms facilitated the exposure of content that the audiences' beliefs already align with. This implied that the feminist advocacy practiced by men will most likely not show up for many with a pre-established anti-feminist sentiment. More digital mechanisms skew my results; as pointed out by Cheng et al., the smaller the viewer count the more extreme the reactions, which was affirmed in my findings and needs to be taken into account when looking at the results or making overall conclusions (2008). Another limitation impeding the ability to make conclusions about potential influence on the audience, lies in the fact that men could experience feminist influence by not even commenting, just watching. People who have had a positive impression of the video might be less inclined to comment. Additionally, other feminist influences could also be more peripheral; content creators that don't identify with the feminist ideology but shame the manosphere and defend gender equality could also trigger a feminist transformation to those watching. It cannot be said for certain where men with unsure foot-standing toward feminist thought turn to. Investigation on feminist male to male influence in person should be encouraged for further research. The sole focus on discourses in the comment section is very limiting when investigating the reception of feminist perspective and hence the influence absorbed or rejected.

9. Implications

On a broader scale, this research is a contribution to the academic discussions of contemporary political conversation online. It has been shown that YouTube is a majorly misogynistic place when talking about feminism and being a male feminist on that platform presents a challenge. As Trott put it; "digital tactics are employed by a masculine public to achieve digital hegemony in the networked sphere" (2022). While the welcoming of feminist men, among other by UN initiatives, have been already proclaimed years ago, there is no significant sign for that to have been translated into action on YouTube. It signifies that this process seems to be slow or happening elsewhere in a different form. Male feminist potential seems to still not be fully realized in the YouTube online sphere, but also is not completely absent. The difficulty in having feminist influence on YouTube is vital, as the aggrieved entitlement discourse in the comment section informs the still potent existence of such sentiment. Aggrieved entitlement has been put in correlation with acts of violence, especially towards minorities and women (Vito, Admire & Hughes, 2018). The uncontrolled thriving of the manosphere without much counter influence improves the risks for such threatening sentiments to spread. At this point the responsibility of YouTube and Facebook is also asked in regulating potential risks of such group formations.

Potentially, the negative reception requires further investigation of the authenticity and quality of the feminist content proclaimed by the feminist men. Without further research on online communities from critical feminist perspectives, Dignam and Rohlinger argue, feminists will continue to be unaware of their political potential (2019).

10. Conclusion

This paper aimed at providing a first conceptualization of how feminist perspectives are shared and received by males on YouTube. A model was provided that summarized the results. Following after, I mapped out the recipient demographics and conducted a broad opinion mining. The result section further exemplified varying themes in the speech of male feminists. It was found that male feminism on YouTube were rare cases, and when shared often were mediated through the departure point of male suffering. It was shown that male feminists use a range of techniques to justify their position and to convince the audience of their feminist perspectives. It has also been shown that if the audiences´ reception should not fall out entirely negative, speakers still need to conform to a degree of patriarchal features, which presents a roadblock to effective feminist action potential. I further inferred that despite limitations, feminist men on YouTube present only very limitedly an alternative influence to the manosphere culture present in it.

Future research is encouraged on alternate social media platforms, as Instagram and TikTok have also shown emerging activistic potential. Male feminist research would benefit from more in-depth interviews to get a clearer image of how males' speech is received. As well as quantitative research to establish empirical evidence to my findings. This research is in its infancy, therefore instead of offering a few concrete findings, this research should be seen as laying the groundwork for opening up new ideas for investigations.

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Appendix A

List of Keywords for searching for feminist men on YouTube

1. Feminist men/guys/boys/males
2. Guys/Boys/Men for feminism
3. Men and feminism
4. Men in feminism
5. Feminist men
6. A male feminist
7. A male ally
8. Being a feminist ally
9. Men on Feminism
10. Men on Gender equality/justice/equity
11. Men feminist activists
12. Male feminist activists
13. Feminist activism and men
14. Guys/Men/boys talk about the patriarchy
15. Guys/Men/boys talk about gender justice
16. Guys/Men/boys talk about gender equality/equity
17. I am a feminist
18. I am a feminist guy/men/boy
19. Let's talk about feminism/patriarchy/gender equality
    a. …abortion
    b. …contraceptives
    c. …women violence
    d. …equal representation
    e. …catcalling
20. A male's/man's perspective on feminism/patriarchy
21. The feminist movement and men
22. Advocating for gender equality/feminism
23. Addressing men´s right issues
24. The problem with men's rights issues
25. Men speak up about feminism/gender equality
26. Equal rights between genders
27. Men talks about walk a mile in her shoes
28. He for she
29. Debating masculinity and Feminism
30. Male feminism

Appendix B

List of videos used

1. Jackson Katz (Speaker 1)

   a. [Violence against women—it's a men's issue: Jackson Katz at TEDxFiDiWomen - Bing video](#)

2. Robert Jensen (Speaker 2)

   a. [Radical feminism is a gift to men | Robert Jensen | TEDxRuhrUniversityBochum - YouTube](#)

3. Michael Kimmel (Speaker 3)

   a. [Why Gender Equality Is Good for Everyone — Men Included | Michael Kimmel | TED Talks - YouTube](#)

4. Dominik Roberto (Speaker 4)

   a. [A Male Feminist's Viewpoint: Being a Privileged Ally | Domenic Roberto | TEDxYouth@BHS - YouTube](#)

5. Justin Baldoni (Speaker 5)

   a. [Why I'm done trying to be "man enough" | Justin Baldoni - YouTube](#)

6. Jimmy Carter (Speaker 6)

   a. [Jimmy Carter: Why I believe the mistreatment of women is the number one human rights abuse - YouTube](#)

7. Patrick Catuz (Speaker 7)

   a. [I'm a man. I'm a feminist. I do porn. | Patrick Catuz | TEDxKlagenfurt - YouTube](#)

8. Healthygamergg "Addressing Misogyny" (Speaker 8)

   a. [Addressing Misogyny - YouTube](#)

9. Justin Trudeau tells the word why "I'm a Feminist" (Speaker 9)

   a. [Justin Trudeau tells the world why "I'm a feminist" - YouTube](#)

10. NotJohnJones "Patriarchy Hurts Men" (Speaker 10)

    a. [Patriarchy Hurts Men - YouTube](#)

11. Jack Howard "I'm a Feminist" (Speaker 11)

    a. [I'm a feminist - YouTube](#)

12. Beau of the fifth Column "Lets talk about anti-feminist memes and the patriarchy" (Speaker 12)
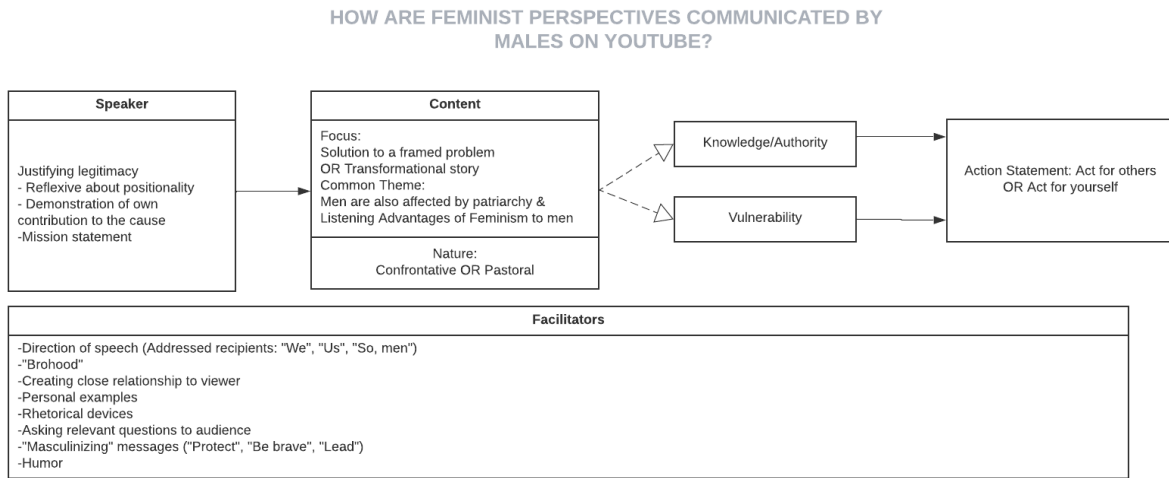
    a. [Let's talk about anti-feminist memes and the patriarchy.... - YouTube](#)

13. The radical therapist chris "5 ways in which Patriarchy affects Relationships" (Speaker 13)

    a. [5 Ways Patriarchy Affects Men and their Relationships - YouTube](#)

Appendix C

Archive of Results

HOW ARE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES COMMUNICATED BY
MALES ON YOUTUBE?

Speaker	Content		
Justifying legitimacy - Reflexive about positionality - Demonstration of own contribution to the cause -Mission statement	Focus: Solution to a framed problem OR Transformational story Common Theme: Men are also affected by patriarchy & Listening Advantages of Feminism to men	Knowledge/Authority	Action Statement: Act for others OR Act for yourself
	Nature: Confrontative OR Pastoral	Vulnerability	

Facilitators
-Direction of speech (Addressed recipients: "We", "Us", "So, men") -"Brohood" -Creating close relationship to viewer -Personal examples -Rhetorical devices -Asking relevant questions to audience -"Masculinizing" messages ("Protect", "Be brave", "Lead") -Humor

Speaker

1. Positionality

A significant observation is the speaker's reflexivity about their own identity whilst holding the speech. This appears to be crucial, as speakers have to demonstrate and convince the audience that they are an "authentic and sincere" feminist. The trend of male feminists justifying their speech follows logically from the prominent risk men present to the feminist movement and the ongoing scrutiny they are suspected to by default among feminists. Distrust is a vital mechanism to ensure that feminist efforts are not to no avail and to avoid adaptive behavior of the oppressor that reinforces patriarchal structures. Indeed, feminist men find themselves in a space of ambiguity while advocating for feminist goals, as they are inherently part of the oppressor demographic. Speaker 2 exemplifies:*"Now I realize that's what we might call the kind of inescapable irony of being me. I leveraged my presumed authority as a man to argue that that system that gives me that authority is very dangerous"*. The reflexive position the messenger

occupied took form in subtle and direct approaches. In most cases, the messengers reflected upon their own positionality, such as speaker 6 who stated: *"I have had a great blessing as a former president, because I have had an access that very few other people in the world have ever had"*. Or speaker 3 clarifying that he is *"Actually, here speaking as a middle class, white man."* Other YouTube creators have reflected upon their gender and their profession impacting their capability to judge: "*I´m not a woman, so I'm not ever going to truly understand what it's like to be a woman. Thankfully, I have a profession in which it is my job to try to understand people's experiences that are different from what are my own"* (Speaker 8).

2. **Positionality in comparison to females**

Some of these statements stress the difference the speakers experienced while advocating feminist goals as men in comparison to women. Speaker 5, for instance, states:*"Am I man enough to just shut the hell up and listen? (Applause). I've got to be honest. I wish that I didn't get an applause."*, alluding to the trend that men are disproportionately praised when speaking out while women are dismissed as biased or crazy, while it should be seen as something "self-explanatory". Speaker 3 further exemplifies this by sharing his experience when working as a teacher; "*whenever my [female] colleague opened her mouth,(...) they'd say, (...) ´You're a woman. You're biased.` When I say it, they go, "Wow, is that interesting."* Speaker 1 surmises this: *"Oftentimes men like myself get a lot of credit and public acclaim for doing the work that women have been doing for a long time."*

4. **Mission statement**

These behavioral tendencies were emphasized with the speaker's own "mission statement" in relation to feminism, outlining their personal aims, contributing to the audience's understanding of the type of person they are listening to as shown in Appendix C. Positionality

and the mission statement can be interlinked, as one messenger demonstrates; *"That's probably the most important part of my job, to be a man who stands up and repeats those terms ʹradical feminist critique of patriarchyʹ as often as possible until people stop being afraid of those terms"* (Speaker 2).

Content

1. Transformation

The main content of the speakers evolved around two types of evidence based storytelling. Either around a personal transformation process the speaker went through or around education on a gender related issue from a more distanced point of view.

A feature apparent across most content was the account of a personal transformation story that narrates the speaker becoming a feminist. Several speakers claimed to have experienced a tension with the predominant idea of masculinity - a *"misfit"* profile- which initiated their encounter with feminism. Speaker 1 exemplifies; *"I realized that I was living in a state of conflict, conflict with who I feel I am at my core and conflict with who the world tells me as a man I should be."*

Often narrated is a transformation process with a departure from one state to the arrival of another, showcasing the speaker's own process of becoming feminist; *"In the first half of my life I struggled to be a normal guy, to be a real man. In the second half of my life I gave that up and things worked out much better because of an unexpected encounter with a radical feminist writing that critiqued patriarchy"* (Speaker 2). This storytelling feature is based on what speaker 2 coined *"the evidence of [their] own life"*.

2. Education on a framed gender issue

For instance, one messenger attributed gendered violence to an overall *"excessive resort to violence, (...)that is increasing tremendously around the world" (Speaker 6)*. Speaker 1 speaks on domestic violence:*"Why is domestic violence still a big problem in the US and all over the*

world? Why do we hear over and over again about new scandals erupting in major institutions like the Catholic Church?". And Speaker 1 further emphasized the dramaticness of the situation, to appeal to the audience's attention by asking how current institutions "[help] *produce abusive men at pandemic rates?"*. Solutions are then provided by the speakers themselves.

3. Common Theme: Patriarchy Affects Men Too

A common thread in the transformational stories as well in speeches that focussed on a more factual account was identified as the fact that patriarchy affects men too. Messengers stress that *"gender equality is also in our interest as men"* and that feminism will enable men *"for the first time to be free",* and as a *"movement that affects in a positive way, not just women and girls, but also men and boys"* (Speaker 3, 4). Speaker 1 underlines this by a more concrete example; *"One of the things that really bothers me about some of the rhetoric against feminists (...) is that somehow they're anti-male. What about all the boys who are profoundly affected in a negative way by what some adult man is doing against their mother, themselves, their sisters? What about all the young men and boys?"*. Often these statements are made to counter the assumption that feminism is for and by women, misled by its word composition.

4. Nature of Content: Pastoral vs. Confrontative

I coined one pattern that arose "pastoral care", which refers to how some content creators acknowledge their male audience's potential emotional reception. Speaker 2 for instance ensures: *"Now, men (...), I'm not saying there's anything inherently wrong with you or me, I'm not saying we have to stop being men. But we need balance, right?"*. Or admitting that the proclaimed actions aren't easy: *"I'm telling you it's not easy in male culture for guys to challenge each other"* (Speaker 1), revealing a level of empathy and relatedness, framing himself as just *"a normal guy"*. Speaker 1 also communicates hope to the audience, demonstrating that the goal of improved gender equality is attainable; *"I know we can do it, we can do better"*.

While some feminist men focussed on a more pastoral approach, some others directly called out men to stress their necessity of involvement in feminist issues*; "The average man that might say, I'm against the abuse of women and girls quietly accepts the privileged position that [he] occupies"* (Speaker 5). In some cases, the tone of voice is antagonistic by sarcastically asking men who complain about the label feminism that they *"might need to reevaluate [their] priorities in this movement"* (Speaker 4)*. Another illustration is a story that speaker 3 shares, titled; **"***A Black Woman Stole My Job",* explaining men´s sense of entitlement (to be viewed in Appendix C). Speaker 12 on anti feminist memes stated:*"What you think doesn't matter, the fact that you don't find her attractive doesn't matter, the fact that she intimidates you because she is more educated or because she makes more money doesn´t matter, that's your hang-up, not hers".*

The dual pathway

The dual pathway represents the two main facilitators feminist males employ to convince their audience to take up on their action statement. Vulnerability can be showcased through sharing the speaker's own emotions; *"If it's about work or sports or politics or women, we have no problem sharing our opinions, but if it's about our insecurities or our struggles, our fear of failure, then it's almost like we become paralyzed. At least, I do*" (Speaker 2).
Authority is signaled subliminally in the case of Speaker 5;*"Not only am I familiar with the 50 states in the United States, but also my wife and I have visited more than 145 countries in the world, and the Carter Center has had full-time programs in 80 nations on Earth. And a lot of times, when we go into a country, we not only meet the king or the president, but we also meet the villagers who live in the most remote areas of Africa".* Speaker 1 attempts the same by showing his experience; *"I work extensively with the US military, all the services."* Speaker 2, also claims to be able to make certain conclusions because *"[He] know[s] this, [he] work[s] with*

men, and [he has] been working with hundreds of thousands of men for many decades now."
Authority can be simply also achieved by an individual's title, position or celebrity status. Most commonly authority through knowledge was employed by listing numerous statistics.

Action Statement

Having a look at the various calls for action, reveals different aims of each speaker, which needs to be considered in the analysis and discussion. Men have called out other men for their e.g. *"complicit silence"* but also suggested steps to take as a man; *"I hope that all of you will join me in being a champion for women and girls around the world and protect their human rights"* (Speaker 2). More strategic views have been voiced; *"Making gender visible to men is the first step to engaging men to support gender equality"* (Speaker 3). Calls for action are sometimes also targeted at a specific group, as in the case of Speaker 1, who calls out *"adult men in power",* and explicitly makes clear that the burden should not be carried by only teenage boys or college men. Other statements can be summarized by *"embracing qualities that are feminine"* (Speaker 2), *"calling each other out for body policing and also calling out objectifying media portrayals"* (Speaker 4), *"to expose yourself and listen to people that are different from you"* (Speaker 4), to encourage *"talking more among men about feminist issues"* (Speaker 3). Action statements are often coupled with positive alternatives as to how to act differently.

Facilitators

I have coined a set of observation facilitators, which are a set of techniques that further assist the listening of the speech and the susceptibility to the messenger's aim.

1. **Direction of speech: How are recipients addressed?**

The intended recipients are addressed explicitly by their gender; *"So men, men, men, men! (Applause)"* (Speaker 2). Speaker 2 addresses "the guys" directly with "you"*; "I've got a*

challenge for all the guys (...).I challenge you". Moreover, to observe is an explicit use of

pronouns such as "our", "us", "we" and "my", which are important signifiers, establishing a

close relationship to the viewer as the speaker identifies himself as part of the audience he

addresses, implicitly communicating (Speaker 6, 2, 1: *The average man accept[s] the privileged*

position that we occupy", "*A lot of us men are good at talking, just not about anything real*", "*I*

realized that I wasn't alone, because my guys had also been struggling", "*We don't like it when*

people challenge our power").

The use of specific pronouns can be classified as establishing a sense of "brotherhood",

resorting to a familiar dynamic among men; *"Guys, this is real"(*Speaker 11) and *"Like that*

sucks dude"(Speaker 11).

The direction of speech is closely interlinked with establishing a close relationship to the viewer

"We have two great institutions in this country that all of us admire: our military and our great

university system" (Speaker 6)*, "We are a society that doesn´t accept these kinds of things"*

(Speaker 6)*,* establishing a relationship with viewers by assuming consensus. Establishing a close

relationship with the viewer is undergirded by personal examples which helps the viewers to

make sense of abstract meanings.

2. **Rhetorical Devices and Questions**

The framework also mentions rhetorical devices, which have been identified as

metaphors, climax, allegories, antithesis, repetitions and personalizations. An example represents

the repetition "the majority of men" to stress the dominance of men over women; *"The majority*

of men that control the military system, the majority of men that control the governments of the

world, and the majority of men that control the great religions" (Speaker 6)*,* mostly to stress a

point. Furthermore, argumentations are supported by instances, in which the messenger asks the

audience relevant questions, to make viewers reflect and follow along with the conclusions the speaker makes: *"Was that really game-changing? Or is it just conforming?"*(Speaker 2)/ *"So, now I've established some of the obstacles to engaging men,but why should we support gender equality?"*(Speaker 3).

3. **Masculinizing of messages ("Protect", "Be brave", "Lead")**

An observation I made is that many of the speakers had the tendency to use stereotypically perceived masculine traits to promote gender equality. A protection narrative is perpetuated; *"[There are]so many situations where men in powerful positions failed to act to protect children, in this case, boys"* (Speaker 1). This is concurrent with the framing of feminist teachings as a father to son relationship; *"We owe it to women. There's no question about it. But we also owe it to our sons."* (Speaker 3). In some instances masculine traits were strategically turned around and put into an antithetical relationship, *"Are you brave enough to be vulnerable?* (Speaker 2). But also reinforcing ideas about hegemonic masculinity in other instances, in which the masculine is seen as the default;*"Because masculine men they're not afraid of independent women because they're not little boys"*(Speaker 12). Another example presented by speaker 1, *"If you make [misogynistic] comments, you're failing at your leadership"*(Speaker 1), referring to the idea that men need to be leaders.

4. **Humor**

Lastly the framework represents a crucial supporting technique that was found in most videos, namely the use of humor. Humor was observed to ridicule men;*"Some men think -- the lightning bolt goes off, and they go, yes, gender equality, and they will immediately begin to mansplain to you your oppression. (..) This results in a syndrome that I like to call 'premature self-congratulation` (Laughter) (Applause)"* (Speaker 3)/*"Okay guys if you are so shallow that*

you're going to marry a woman because she can cook I would hope that your palate is a little bit more refined, then you're setting the bar pretty low" (Speaker 12). This is exercised to also prove their feminist identity to viewers, but also to make content enjoyable to listen to and keep viewers engaged. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that the humor can be directed towards different audiences. Humor can be self-serving (*"So we've made some progress, partially because I was president and so forth -- (Applause) (Laughter) --"* (Speaker 6)) and at the same time to ridicule themselves, *"I've had the great honor of playing some of the greatest male role models ever represented on television. You might recognize me as "Shirtless Date Rapist" to the "Shirtless Medical Student," and the "Shirtless Steroid-Using Con Man" "*(Speaker 2), ridiculing himself in an ironic way.