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The Social Representation of Feminism within the On-line Movement “Women Against Feminism”

Abstract

The present paper aims to analyse the social representation of feminism within the “Women Against Feminism” (WAF) on-line movement that is based on a shared blog which gained significant coverage in the U.S. and U.K. media since the summer of 2014. Using the method of quantitative content analysis and the insights provided by social representations theory, the paper will disclose what lies behind the concept of ‘feminism’ for the group embracing the WAF movement and also aims to find whether the members of this on-line community can be described as postfeminists. The article will conclude that the social representation of feminism within the WAF on-line movement is not based on a lack of information, but rather on a stereotypical understanding of the concept and on a non-nuanced perspective upon the history of feminism and its current developments (in particular the difference between post-feminism and third wave feminism). Moreover, similar arguments raised against feminism have been also drawn in the past, WAF sharing similar arguments with the ‘80s media backlash against feminism.

Keywords: feminism, social representations theory, Women Against Feminism.

Introduction

The present paper addresses the social representation of feminism as it is depicted on the website Women Against Feminism, a blog which appeared in July 2013 and whose popularity increased overwhelmingly since July 2014, when it ceased to be a simple personal website and became a movement in the on-line medium. Thus, the website started receiving materials from its fans that have been posted on the website. The materials consisted of ‘selfie’ pictures in which the fans (all women) justified their opinion against feminism by holding up handmade placards that started with the statement “I don’t need feminism because”. In the summer of 2014, the website became extremely popular also on social media platforms – it gathered over 40,000 fans on Facebook, it became present on Twitter and it was listed as a subject on Wikipedia. Moreover, its popularity was fuelled by the criticisms issued by international magazines and news websites, as well as by feminist activists and academics. In the United States, feminism was resurrected in the mass-media after some of the most popular icons of the music industry

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declared themselves feminists and have included in their videos and lyrics direct links to feminism. The result of this mass dissemination initiated by pop culture, spread mostly in the on-line medium, was the comeback of the debate on the term 'feminism'. The website included in this analysis represents one of the aftermaths of this comeback.

Using the theoretical framework of the theory of social representations, this paper tries to offer a more comprehensive view on the growing on-line movement Women Against Feminism. I have chosen to use this theoretical framework as the movement has drawn the attention of various international newspapers which have criticised how the WAF supporters understand the notion of feminism. Content analysis, the employed research method, allowed me to identify both the frequency of specific meanings attributed to feminism by the analysed group, as well as the relationship between these meanings.

The main objective of this research is to illustrate what lies behind feminism's vehement rejection by the analysed group and whether this rejection is linked to a specific understanding of the history and concept of feminism. The secondary objective is to investigate whether we can classify this movement as an outcome of the tensions between post-feminism and third wave feminism. Given the fact that the last two approaches are contemporary and that mass-media tends to endorse fragmented aspects of each approach, feminism ends up being portrayed as a highly controversial and unclear concept.

The paper will be split into three main parts. The first part introduces the theory of social representations: it investigates the relation between social representations and communication through negotiation and conflict, and it also presents the role of individual identity, group membership, and cognitive polyphasia. Here I will proceed with a synthesis of the most important contributions and of the contradictions and discussion on the theory of social representations. The second part focuses on the methodology and the data obtained: the frequency of some terms associated with feminism in the studied group and also the contingency matrix. The third section briefly presents the evolution of the feminist movement, the differences between third wave feminism and post-feminism, and explores the social representation of feminism within the analysed group.

I. Social representations: history and characteristics

I chose to use the framework of the theory of social representation to better understand how social representations are formed, what is the role an academic understanding on a term can have on the mainstream understanding of this term and how (or if) mass-media (or new forms of media) can have a higher influence on the mainstream meaning of a concept, despite the original meaning of this concept.

The term 'social representation' first appeared in 1961 and was coined by Serge Moscovici. With this concept, the author tried to study the relationship between collective representations, and common and scientific knowledge. Moscovici was the first to conduct an empirical study on social representations, in his 1961 paper on the social representation of psychoanalysis.

Social Representations Theory (SRT) started from the concept of 'collective representations' developed by Durkheim in 1898 which stated that representations are external and do not belong to the individual but to the community to which he belongs. The terminological nuance between the two types of representations is not the aspect that determines the differ-

ences between the two approaches because in the XIX century the word 'collective' was often used instead of 'social' (Moscovici in Moscovici & Markova, 1998, p. 401). The difference does not lie in their name, but in the claims of each theory. The critics of collective representations stress that Durkheim's theory is deficient because it appeals to a high degree of generality and ignores the fragmentation and heterogeneity of society. As such, collective representations theory does not constitute a realistic approach as it considers society as a uniform whole, whereas society is, in fact, "a plurality of dynamic systems of knowledge which creates a continuum of different representations, extremely unstable and different from one group to another" (Howarth in Deac, 2008, p. 18).

Moscovici's main objection to the theory of collective representations is that the latter is too static and under-equipped to understand contemporary society (Hoijer, 2011, p. 4) – where individuals can also contribute to the formation of representations. Social representations, on the other hand, are not a static concept, they are not simple reflections or reproductions of an external reality, on the contrary: their meaning is formed and consolidated through negotiation processes, which implies the coexistence of representations which are competing with each other or which are contradictory – within the same group, within a culture or within a person (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005, p. 433). Furthermore, Durkheim considered that collective representations are produced by a sole source of authority which is persistent to change and has the purpose of uniting societies (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005, p. 433). Moscovici distances himself from this approach and considers that social homogeneity is not a realistic depiction of society, underlining the plurality of the representations encountered in a group.

While the theory of collective representations stated representations are the result of the macro-social system and not the sum of individual representations, SRT endorses this principle only as applied to the group level (Raudsepp, 2005, p. 458). Another essential difference among the two approaches is the fact that Durkheim saw collective representations as rational, whereas Moscovici considers that the relationship between thought and emotion constitute the foundation of social representations. For the latter "society is not a source of information but of meaning" (Moscovici in Joffe, 1998, p. 31). Moreover, Moscovici considered that the dynamic aspect of social representations – their power of generating actions – is due mostly to their relation with their collective passions and beliefs.

Within SRT, individuals are presented as members of social groups and this is the reason why social phenomena cannot be reduced to an individual level. Therefore, social representations are not the sum of individual minds, but a reflection of the social processes which take place between the members of a social unit (Raudsepp, 2005, p. 458). Wagner underlines the central role that the social representations grant to groups and not to the world in general: "social representations belong to the 'tamed world'" and represent social objects specific to a group (Wagner in Raudsepp, 2005, p. 460).

Moscovici explains how social representations are formed by calling the metaphor of the 'amateur scientist': any person selects, carves out and classifies the information that are unknown in a similar manner like a documentary maker and integrates them in the same universe, without being constrained by the rigour and prudence of the specialist. Even if the new ideas and terms are not actively wide-spread, regular people continue to seek explanations, this exploration being motivated by the lack of understanding of the respective terms and ideas (Joffe, 1998, p. 25). According to Moscovici (1997, p. 42), the purpose of such an endeavour is not to continue the process of knowledge, but to be updated and to fill in the gaps. He underlines that:

“no notion is put into circulation together with its usage instructions, no experience is presented together with its practice method, thus, once received, the individual uses them in the most suitable manner according to his opinion. It is important that he succeeds to integrate them in a coherent image of his reality or that he succeeds to slip them in a language that allows him to speak of what everyone else is speaking” (Moscovici, 1997, p. 42).

This behaviour of the amateur, self-taught scientist, freed from rules and usage instructions of the new experiences and notions, is often limited by “prejudices, by already-made visions and by dialects borrowed from the world of the discourse” (Moscovici, 1997, p. 43).

Moscovici insists on differentiating between social representations, on the one hand, and myths, stereotypes, opinions and attitudes, on the other hand. For him, the latter three represent “short-term answers on the objects in themselves” while representations are the foundation on which these three are based on (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005, p. 438). The myth belongs to the archaic world, while representations belong to the actual society; the former is considered an absolute science while the latter is only one of the way of knowing the concrete world (Moscovici, 1997, p. 33). An opinion represents, on one hand, “a formula socially valued towards a subject and, on the other hand, a position towards a controversial issue of the society” (Moscovici, 1997, p. 35). Opinions do not present in detail the context in which they are issued nor the concepts that lie at their foundation – this is why opinions have a partial character and are less stable.

The relationship between social representations and attitudes is more complex. Markova (in Moscovici & Markova, 1998, p. 382) mentions that U.S. theorists – supporters of the importance of attitudes and their separation from representations, erroneously classify attitudes as being individual while they classify social representations as collective. According to Moscovici, attitudes study the “relationship between thought and object”, but no one can have a thought on an object without having a representation of that object (Moscovici & Markova, 1998, p. 380). Thus, having an attitude means in fact to express an attitude towards your own representation that you have on that object (Moscovici and Markova, 1998, p. 383). For Moscovici (1997, p. 52), attitudes are not opposed to representations, but represent one of the latter’s dimensions – the three dimensions being attitude, information, and image.

Most of the theorists consider that social representations do not have a clear or encompassing definition, but Moscovici drafted the concept as a multi-faced one that focuses on value systems, ideas, images, and practices, thus social representations being both cognitive and social processes (Bidjari, 2011, p. 1594). As Serrano Oswald (2013) underlines, cognition is social in itself because it develops through social interaction. She stresses the importance of culture which represents the cognition’s framework, making possible the formation, dissemination and the transformation of social representations.

SRT focuses on two interdependent aspects: the content of the meanings of the daily life and “the specific processes by which these contents are shaped” (Joffee, 1998, p. 23). Joffee mentions three processes that generate social representations: (i) the transformation of experts’ ideas into common language through communication; (ii) the return to the forefront of past ideas and their imposition on a new event that must be understood; and (iii) the saturation of the event that has to be understood with the symbolic meanings already existent in the culture.

For Moscovici, social representations have a double function: firstly, they “establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world” and secondly, to “enable communication to take place among members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying un-

ambiguously the various aspects of their world" (Moscovici in Hoijer, 2011, p. 5). A detailed analysis of social representations identifies four core roles: (i) the function of knowing: allows understanding and communication; (ii) the guidance functions: they guide conducts and practices; (iii) the legitimacy function: social subjects can justify their positions and behaviours *a posteriori*; (iv) the identity function: social groups can define their identity and specificity (Serrano Oswald, 2013, p. 67).

Moscovici (1997) highlights two main characteristics of social representations. Firstly, they are not static, but "dynamic ensembles" that produce behaviours and relations with the environment. Thus, social representations have a creative task, contributing to the processes of social conducts and of orienting social communication. Secondly, "any representation is someone's representation", it is a method of knowing through which the person that knows re-positions himself in what he knows – here individual identity and group membership play a key role in the development of a representation. The nature of social representations is a relational one, being "impossible to find an isolated social representation" (Serrano Oswald, 2013, p. 65).

Voelklein and Howarth (2005) raise the issue of the power relations in the construction and dispersion of social representation and of the justification of the actions determined by social representations, especially taking into account the importance of communication (be it dialogical or through mass-media): "we need to analyse how representations may be infused with ideological power to justify status quo and so maintain systems of inequality and exclusion" (Voelklein & Howarth in Hoijer, 2011, p. 14).

The dynamic aspect of social representations

Wagner (1998, p. 309) insists on clarifying the implications that derive from the dynamic aspect of social representations. He highlights that the French meaning of the word 'representation' (used by Moscovici) has constructive and dynamic connotations. Unlike the mother tongue of SRT, English and German languages consider representations as being something static or a reproduction of something (e.g. maps or pictures). For Wagner, this difference between the French and the English meaning can easily explain why SRT has been mostly ignored by the non-French-speaking academic field.

Social representations are dynamic assemblies because they "not only influence people's daily practices – but constitute these practices" (Howarth 2006, p. 73). For Howarth, the dynamic aspect is given by the inter-relational component involved in the dialogue and negotiation with the others. Wagner considers that ignoring the importance of action within social representations deems them to the static, descriptive aspect. For social representations to be dynamic, they have to include both acts of speech as well as the actions through which a social object appears: actions, like speech, it is not just an expression of a social representations, but analytically it is an integral part of it (Wagner 1998, p. 314).

The dynamic aspect includes, besides actions, the situations in which the representations change or the situations in which new representations emerge. Castro and Batel (2008, p. 482) underline the importance of time in this changing process and they identify two phases: the emergence of the change/new element and its generalization. During the emergence phase, the ideals defended by a numerical minority takes shape as a proposal of changing an element from the society, for example a law. In the generalization phase the creative potential of the new proposal is debated. During the debate, hybrid representations appear – they

incorporate and accommodate the new ideas with the old ones. As Moscovici reminds us, the emergence of a new representation (ideas, scientific knowledge) often determines “cultural and intellectual battles”, the shaping of a representation being accompanied both by conflict and cooperation (Moscovici & Markova, 1998, p. 377). Howarth (2006, pp. 69-74) considers that representations are not the reality and that the two can be separated. Her main argument relies on the fact that conflict and resistance are essential for representations: “different representations compete in their claims to reality, and so defend, limit and exclude other realities”. Thus, Howarth (2006) supports Moscovici’s idea that social representations do not overlap with reality, but that they influence and end up by constructing the common practices of people.

The role of communication and mediation

According to SRT, social representations represent the result of the transformation and translation of scientific knowledge into common sense (Joffe, 1998, p. 23). Moscovici underlines the existence of two universes of knowledge: the reified and the consensual universe. The former is specific to scientific knowledge while the latter to the common knowledge. The main difference between the two consists of the fact that the former tries to establish explanations on the world which are independent and impartial towards people, while the latter is based on negotiation and reciprocal acceptance (Moscovici & Markova, 1998, p. 386).

Following Moscovici’s direction, Joffe (1998) considers that the transformation process of the scientific knowledge into common knowledge involves a third actor, namely mass-media. She highlights that “the mass-media are regarded as the mediators of scientific ideas to lay thinkers” but that the communication process does not mandatorily involve the presence of mass mediation (Joffe, 1998, p. 22). Joffe succeeds to bring to the forefront the fact that mass-media does not offer a photocopy of the scientific knowledge or of the experts’ opinions, but that it adapts the content with the scope of capturing the attention of the public and for this they “simplify and sensationalise expert issues” (Joffe, 1998, p. 23). Wagner (1998, p. 305) also mentions that social representations are the result of a discursive process during which the media forms involved model the content, structure, form and speed of the representations that are spread at the group level.

The dynamic character of social representations and their relational, social aspect are deeply connected with the communication process – and, implicitly, with negotiation and mediation. According to Moscovici (1997, p. 60), “communication influences the very structure of representations”, which gives a central and priority role to the process of communication in the formation of representation. Communication has a double implication in SRT. Firstly, communication intervenes in the elaboration process of representations through making the transition from science to common sense (from reified to consensual universe). Moscovici’s theory offers a central role to this first implication, especially given the role mass-media plays. Secondly, because social representations cannot exist independently, detached from a person or a social group, communication intervenes in the process of negotiating the meaning and the construction of social representations between groups or between an individual and a group. While Moscovici focused more on the first implication, Markova underlines the communication and the dialogical methods between groups within social representations. These two directions of analysis on the implications of communication in the formation of social representations reveal the existence of “two problematic reasons: technological mediation and, re-

spectively, the existence of an objective reference" (Deac, 2008, p. 24). This becomes extremely relevant in the cases where the representation does not refer to a concrete, physical object, but to concepts, ideas and theories.

For Moscovici, social representations "are not a silent thing" limited to an object and its transformation, but a field of an ideological battle, a battle of ideas (Moscovici & Markova, 1998, p. 394). This battle takes place in two different areas: in the selective transformation of the representation through mass-media and in the conflicts between groups or individuals. An essential problem in conflict and negotiation is given by the fact that communication processes perpetuate the power differences of the parties involved. For Howarth (2006, p. 72), the theory of power is implicit in the research of social representations. She underlines that Moscovici's theory does not consider the role of power in the reinforcement and legitimacy of the knowledge system specific to experts, since "reality for the individual is, to a high degree, determined by what is socially accepted as reality" (Howarth, 2006). Jovchelovitch (in Howarth, 2006) highlights that theorists of social representations should not neglect that "different social groups have more and less access to the (co)construction of social reality within the public sphere".

Individual identity, group membership and 'the other'

Coming back to the relationship between the represented object and the way its social representation is formed, Wagner (1998, p. 306) considers that "an object is always an object for a group, society or culture" – people assign to it characteristics and values and only in this way they can talk about it. Thus, because the role of the person that observes the object is central in the formation of social representations, SRT should not neglect the importance of individual identity, group membership and the relation with the others. According to Duveen (in Serrano Oswald, 2013, p. 66), identity is the "the force or power that links a person or group to the attitude or belief, in a word, to the representation". Howarth (2006, p. 78) underlines the same aspects, mentioning that without understanding identity "could not explain why and how different people use representations to different ends – to legitimize, to contest, to negate, to transform". This correlates with the fact that social representations are directly connected to the processes of confrontation, perpetuation and transformation of collective and social identities (Serrano Oswald, 2013).

The social representation of an object does not correspond implicitly to its objective characteristics, but it is construed "according to the characteristics of the social individuals who appropriate the object through the communication processes that they develop around it" (Bidjari, 2011, p. 1594). Thus, there is a strong correlation between the social representation of an object and the identity of its observer. As Howarth (2006, p. 78) mentions, "we use representations to position ourselves, to claim common identities and to defend ourselves against stigmatizing or marginalizing practice".

Emphasizing the role of identity in the development of social representations, Joffe brings to the forefront the protection of identity, and this includes both group and individual identity. She mentions that the representations chosen by individuals are selected so that they do not contradict a state of comfort and security. Joffe (1998) also mentions the situations where individuals encounter new objects or events. Here, individuals will form an opinion on these novelties so that they are acceptable for the group they identify with: "groups favour the images, symbols or metaphors compatible with in-group values. So, the identity positioning of

the representor determines the vision which is held on a new phenomenon. Different groups have different representations in accordance with the identities which require protection” (Joffe, 1998, p. 28). Moreover, Joffe considers that the social representation chosen on a phenomenon maintains the status of certain groups in the society.

Social representations do not exclude considering the opinions of other groups on the object of the representation, on the contrary: knowing the representations of other groups is necessary for the group/individual to choose its own social representation (Raudsepp, 2005, p. 459). Thus, the chosen representation by a certain group is the one that increases solidarity among its members and facilitates the communication between them (Joffe, 1998).

Cognitive polyphasia

The interdependence between the observer’s identity and the formation of social representations makes the latter to contain contradictory ideas that may lead to polemical representations correlated with diverse conflicts and controversies within society. As Moscovici noted, the representations shared by a group are not found as a “monolith whole”, but rather they are formed in a social frame of negotiation, which leads to multiple voices or polyphasia (Tateo & Iannaccone, 2012, p. 65).

The concept of ‘cognitive polyphasia’ was coined by Moscovici to characterize the plurality and diversity of social representations, the “simultaneous and dynamic co-existence of different ways of thinking and knowing, for example the traditional and the modern knowledge”. This concept relies on the argument that as language can have multiple meanings, so does cognitive polyphasia – “people have in fact different representations according to the group they belong to, to their profession”, etc (Markova and Moscovici, 1998, p. 385). Others (Duveen, Lyod, Foster, Howarth) consider that cognitive polyphasia is correlated with the existence of the two universes of knowledge, the reified and the consensual, which brings into discussion the problem of the asymmetry of power.

As Raudsepp (2005, p. 465) mentions, the diversity of social representations has a negative effect – the appeal to symbolic conflicts and intolerance. Most conflicts happening today are of symbolic nature, mediated and consolidated by certain social representations and social identities associated with them. The conflict between more social representations or between the meanings of one does not have to be limited to the different visions on an object between groups and individuals. It is more likely a capture of intrapersonal situations, not interpersonal: “different and incompatible cognitive styles and forms of knowledge can co-exist within one social group and can be employed by one and the same individual” (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005, p. 434).

II. Methodology and obtained data

In this paper, I will use content analysis to identify the reasons and conceptual associations that underlie the on-line movement Women Against Feminism. In the first stage, I identified the both the dominant themes and those who appear marginally in the arguments of the studied group (Table 1). At the second stage (Table 2), I grouped these themes into pairs to gain an overview on both the frequency of association of two themes within the units analysed, as well as any deviation from the computed/expected values (calculated based on the formu-

la of the contingency analysis). This latter difference highlights if in the units included in the analysis a pair of two themes appears more or less than the estimated value generated through the formula. Such differences suggest, in cases the real values are significantly higher than the computed ones, that an association of themes is employed more than the expected value and signals that we need to better look into this pair of themes.

I consider that the language used and the association between various terms is the proper method to capture the social representation of feminism for the studied group, especially given Moscovici's opinion that both changes within representations, as well as the way people talk about them are important. Most research focused on social representations relied on qualitative methods such as interviews, and less on quantitative ones. For the current paper, I chose in the pre-analysis phase the pictures posted in the website www.womenagainstfeminism.tumblr.com.

I will employ the contingencies technique as it serves the purpose of extracting from the text the relationship between the elements of the message and, thus, highlights the simultaneous presence of two elements in the same semantic context unit (Bortun, 2010, p. 140). According to Osgood, the contingencies analysis does not ask which is the frequency of a certain term/theme, but the frequency of occurrence of that term with other terms (Osgood in Bortun, 2010, p. 140).

The selected units and the context

The website www.womenagainstfeminism.tumblr.com was launched in July 2013 as a reaction against the campaign "Who needs feminism?" initiated by Duke University students from 2012 that was focused on the on-line dissemination of issues related to gender equality. From its launching moment and until July 2014, the WAF website was unknown. Starting July 2014, its popularity increased substantially, thus it ceased to be just a personal blog/website and became a movement in the on-line medium. As such, the website started receiving materials to be posted from its fans, pictures in which they expressed their anti-feminist position and presented their arguments on handmade placards that started with the expression "I don't need feminism because". Also in the summer of 2014, the website created its Facebook page that reached 40,000 fans, a Wikipedia page and a hashtag on Twitter. Moreover, its popularity was fuelled by the critiques issued by mainstream magazines and websites such as The Guardian, Huffington Post, Los Angeles Times, Irish Independent, etc.

A total of 204 pictures were included in the analysis, they represent all the pictures posted on WAF in July and August 2014, excluding duplicates. The unit of analysis was the written content of each picture, and the quantitative analysis involved the identification and counting of words and expressions that belong to a certain theme. The selected photos show that WAF supporters tend to share similar demographics: almost all are from the U.S. (except 2, out of 204), almost all are white, young women how also seem to be middle class. Due to the various arguments exposed in the 204 photographs, I identified the following sets of themes and words used in the rejection of the concept of feminism: individualism (expressed through the appeal to individual capacities to overcome any obstacle), misandry (fear or hatred towards men), a negative interaction with feminists, the alternative of humanism, femininity, family, equality, the victimising attitude, promiscuity, special treatment, rape, responsibility, men's problems. The terms chosen for the contingencies analysis are not cer-

tain specific key-words, but mostly thematic terms. Table 1 shows the overall presence of these terms.

Table 1. The overall percentage of terms.

Term	Percentage
Individualism	23.03 %
Misandry	42.15 %
Contact with feminists	13.23 %
Humanism	10.29 %
Femininity	12.25 %
Family and traditional gender roles	11.76 %
Equality	25%
Victimizing attitude	17.64 %
Promiscuity	3.4 %
Special treatment	12.25 %
Rape	10.29 %
Responsibility	13.23 %
Men's problems	8.33 %

We can notice that the terms that appear mostly refer to misandry, equality, individualism and victimizing attitude. In a lesser degree we encounter terms that refer to rape, humanism and men's issues.

The definition of the terms

I will present in detail the content of each term included in Table 1, as they appear on the WAF website. The association of feminism with misandry represents the most frequent one (42.15%). Misandry is seen as a characteristic of feminism. Thus, WAF contributors declare that they do not need feminism or that they are against it because “it demonizes men”, “considers men guilty of every woman's mistake”, “is a sexist movement full of hatred”, “criticizes sexualisation but it sexualizes men”, “considers all men are rapists”, “I love my husband”, and “because I do not hate men”.

Equality is the second most-encountered term used in opposition with feminism. Among the WAF arguments we can count: “women are equal to men, not superior”, “the supremacy of one gender does not mean gender equality”, “women's rights or equality?”, “equality includes men too”, “equality of opportunity is already achieved – we have equal rights”. Thus, equality is considered either as an achieved, outdated objective, either as opposite to feminism. This latter interpretation is encountered in arguments that consider that feminism promotes special treatment in the favour of women: “pay rise even if women work lesser hours”,

"the gender pay gap is an option, not sexism", "feminism does not want equality, but privileges for women". Moreover, another distinctive theme used in justifying anti-feminism is focused on the fact that feminism ignores the situation of men: "feminism marginalizes men's suffering", "ignores that men have problems too", "neglects the infringement of human rights when it comes to men".

Individualism is one of the most cited reasons against feminism – WAF fans mentioning "no one can tell me what I can and what I can't", "I am capable of critically thinking and I don't need to be represented by other women", "I can define myself and select my values according to my own standards", "because I should succeed in life through effort, not to obtain everything through affirmative action", "I am the only obstacle in the way of my success, not patriarchy", "I can assume my own mistakes without blaming the imaginary patriarchy".

Many of the arguments raised against feminism mention personal interactions with feminists: "I have been called misogynist because I do not agree with certain feminist ideas", "feminists have offended me", "feminism made me feel unsafe", "I feel more oppressed by feminists than by men". Humanism is often presented as a better alternative, being justified by arguments such as: "I am humanist, I prefer equal rights for everyone", "because I respect all people", "because oppression is universal", "I prefer human rights". Regarding the rejection of feminism by calling femininity and beauty, arguments range from "I like being feminine" to "feminism rejects femininity but tries to feminize men".

Family and traditional gender roles are invoked as arguments against feminism but in a lesser degree (11.76%). Among the expressions used to frame the opposition feminism – family, we count: "feminism destroys families", "I like being a housewife", "children are not a burden", "being a wife and mother is the highest achievement in life".

Among the terms relating to the victimizing attitude of feminism we can identify the following arguments: "being a victim does not make me stronger", "feminism focuses on victimization, not empowerment", "I am not a victim", "feminism tells us that we are victims of men". Feminism is rejected also due to its association with promiscuity – "feminism is an excuse for a slutty behaviour", "feminists are sluts". Promiscuity is correlated also with the representation of rape and of personal responsibility. Other invoked arguments are: "eye-rape is an absurdity", "rape culture does not exist", "if I get drunk to a party and have sex with a stranger, this means irresponsibility, not rape", "feminism fights for women's power, not for their responsibility".

The above detailed presentation of the terms included in the analysis outlines the conceptual framework around which feminism is built and how it is perceived by contributors of WAF website.

The contingency values of the terms

The table below shows the contingency degree within each pair of terms. The matrix allows us to observe the fact that the expected values (obtained from multiplying the percentage of each term listed in Table 1) do not always have and identical or similar value to the real values (obtained by counting the co-occurrence of the terms in the 204 photos). While over a half of the real contingency values are similar or identical with the expected ones, the matrix also includes 15 pairs of terms that have different values. I will briefly analyse the cases in which we can identify differences between the value of the real contingencies (the left half of the table) and the value of the predicted, computed contingencies (the right half of the table).

Table 2. The contingency table for all units included in the analysis.

TERMS Computed values	Individualism	Misandry	Contact with feminists	Humanism	Feminism	Family and traditional gender roles	Equality	Victim	Promiscuity	Special treatment	Rape	Responsibility	Men's problems
Real values													
Individualism	-	0.097	0.03	0.023	0.028	0.027	0.057	0.04	0.007	0.028	0.023	0.03	0.019
Misandry	0.063	-	0.055	0.043	0.051	0.049	0.105	0.074	0.014	0.051	0.043	0.055	0.035
Contact with feminists	0.019	0.049	-	0.013	0.016	0.015	0.033	0.023	0.004	0.016	0.013	0.017	0.011
Humanism	0.019	0.039	0.0	-	0.012	0.012	0.025	0.018	0.003	0.012	0.01	0.013	0.008
Feminism	0.014	0.058	0.0	0.009	-	0.014	0.030	0.021	0.004	0.015	0.012	0.016	0.010
Family and traditional gender roles	0.014	0.068	0.009	0.0	0.024	-	0.029	0.020	0.003	0.014	0.012	0.015	0.009
Equality	0.019	0.112	0.024	0.039	0.039	0.014	-	0.044	0.008	0.030	0.025	0.033	0.020
Victim	0.044	0.107	0.014	0.004	0.014	0.014	0.039	-	0.005	0.021	0.018	0.023	0.014
Promiscuity	0.004	0.024	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.009	0.004	0.0	-	0.004	0.003	0.004	0.002
Special treatment	0.029	0.053	0.009	0.004	0.024	0.014	0.078	0.044	0.004	-	0.012	0.016	0.010
Rape	0.014	0.058	0.014	0.004	0.004	0.009	0.029	0.014	0.009	0.024	-	0.013	0.008
Responsibility	0.044	0.088	0.019	0.009	0.019	0.014	0.029	0.063	0.004	0.019	0.024	-	0.011
Men's problems	0.009	0.049	0.004	0.019	0.004	0.004	0.034	0.029	0.004	0.009	0.029	0.009	-

To begin with, I will discuss the highest contingency values, according to the matrix. The highest frequency of co-occurrence is noticed in the couple of terms 'equality' and 'misandry'. The contingency expected value is close to the obtained one, but in the second case it is higher (real contingency 0.112 / 0.105 estimated contingency). Thus, WAF contributors declare themselves to be adepts of equality and reject feminism as they see it as a man-hating ideology.

The second highest contingency value is met between 'individualism' and 'misandry': the degree of expected contingency (0.097) is greater than the actual value (0.063). The high correlation between these terms is due to over-estimation of self and self-determination, plus the perception of feminism as a men-hating ideology. The arguments invoked in the posts that relate to the pair of terms 'individualism' – 'misandry' rest on the idea that the only obstacle to success of any kind is the individual and that men are used as 'scapegoats' in justifying failed business by feminists.

We encounter another high contingency value between 'victim' and 'misandry', but here we find a considerable difference between the anticipated, computed value (0.074) and the real one (0.107). The higher degree of actual, measured association between the two terms is determined by framing feminism as a movement that encourages victimizing attitudes in women, repeatedly telling women that they are oppressed by men, which they automatically consider offenders.

Another conceptual couple with a high value of contingency is 'family and traditional gender roles' and 'misandry'. We find here a difference between the expected value (0.049) and the real value (0.068). WAF contributors thus argument their rejection of feminism in light of the fact that their families have a dynamic that contradicts the principles of feminism, but these are only summarized as fear or hatred against men. To that end, several separate posts say they are against feminism because it destroys families, that being a housewife is thankworthy, etc.

Also within the contingencies of 'misandry' (the most common term, present in 42.15% of posts) and other terms we find the pair of terms is 'misandry' – 'rape'. The real value of contingency is of 0.058 and the computed one of 0.043. This association highlights an alarming perception as WAF contributors blame feminists for rape and believe that men do not have any guilt as not all men are rapists. So rape is disregarded by anti-feminist supporters which consider that the fault lies with the abused person, not the rapist – which also corre-

lates with the following pair of terms: 'rape' – 'responsibility' which has a value of real contingency of 0.024 (and expected of 0.013). Through this association, the WAF group illustrate their representation of rape as a subjective fact where women catalogue as rape a sexual act that they regret and for which would rather not be hold accountable, preferring instead to play the victim and blame men. This is illustrated clearly by the value of real contingency (0.063) – almost three times higher than the expected value (0.023) between the terms 'responsibility' – 'victim', representing another alarming association because it disregards facts and emphasises the perception of the victim, who, in the eyes of WAF, refused to take responsibility for her actions and resorts to demonizing men to justify any mistake, failure or regret.

Moreover, the value of real contingency of the association between 'victim' and 'men's issues' fall into the pattern above, which is two times higher (0.029) than that calculated (0.014). The group analysed thus rejects feminism because it limits the victim status as belonging exclusively to women, ignoring situations in which men are placed in disadvantaged situations, men being also victims of physical or emotional violence. Moreover, we encounter a value of real contingency three times higher (0.029) than the calculated one (0.008) between the pair of terms 'rape' – 'men's problems', which shows again the representation of feminism as focused on demonizing men and ignoring their difficulties.

Also linked to the idea that feminism promotes the victimization of women we can notice a considerable difference between the real value of contingency (0.044) and the calculated one (0.021), the former being double, between the pair of terms 'victim' – 'special treatment'. Thus, feminism is blamed because it promotes the disadvantaged situation of women as being determined exclusively by men and thus appeals to demands which violate the principle of equality, by demanding to compensate those situations in which women are or have been victims. WAF contributors believe, as mentioned above, that the victimizing attitude is an unreal construct, that patriarchy is imaginary and thus that the call for special treatment (understood in the form of affirmative action) for women is not justified.

Another difference between the calculated and actual contingency value we find between the terms 'family and traditional roles' and 'femininity', the computed value is nearly two times lower than the real one, respectively 0.014 and 0.024. So, in justifying the rejection of feminism, WAF supporters often mention their attachment to traditional values and that feminism destroys families (because it opposes to the dynamics of the traditional family in which the husband is the head of the family where he deals exclusively with the support of the family, and women handle household work and raise children), and that feminism proposes the masculinisation of women in the sense that rejects femininity and the importance of how women look and how they dress.

We encounter another significant difference in the case of the pair of terms 'equal' – 'special treatment', where the calculated contingency value (0.030) is more than two times lower than the real contingency value (0.078). This can be explained by frequently resorting to supporting equality – which can not be found in the feminist doctrine according to WAF contributors, as they consider that feminism promotes the opposite of equality, namely special treatment in favour of women, which in the view of the WAF group leads to discrimination.

It can be noted, however, that I did not find any appearance related to sexuality in any of the 204 units included in the analysis. Thus, the conception of WAF contributors on feminism include: feminism does not support equality but positive discrimination of women in virtue of their victimization, WAF supporters consider that patriarchy is fictional, that not all men are rapists, that rape is often an excuse to run away from responsibility, that feminism opposes suc-

cess on individual merits and proposes instead a collective effort to generate unjustified privileges for women, that feminism destroys families because they want to redefine the concept of family through the feminization or demonization of men and masculinisation of women.

III. Debate: the social representation of feminism within the analysed group

A brief note on the different types of feminism

As feminist core ideas have varied over time and as feminist movements have not manifested constantly, most theorists prefer to classify feminism into three waves. First wave feminism was also called equality feminism because it marked the first mass feminist movements that managed to obtain the equal legal status for women and men (Miroiu, 2004). The first wave corresponded to the period between the middle of the nineteenth century until 1920s mostly in the U.S., U.K, New Zealand, Australia and the Scandinavian countries. It is worth mentioning that the global context (First World War – women were needed on the employment market) played a key role as feminism demanded and obtained, in most part, equality in the public sphere, such as full voting rights and equal treatment in employment.

The second wave feminism lasted from the middle of the twentieth century (1949 in France, when Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex*, and 1963 in the U.S., when Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*) until the end of the 1980s. Its main feature consisted of the shift from equality to difference, and this difference between men and women was mostly encountered in the private sphere (Miroiu, 2004). The second wave came as a complementary part to the first wave as it was focused on the private sphere. As such, one of the main mottos of the movement was “the personal is political”, which stressed that aspects which were previously absent from the political and public discourse should be addressed so that women to be treated on equal terms as men. Second wave feminist considered that, although women gained their public rights, equality was not achieved because their private lives reinforced inequality. Based on Friedan’s de Beauvoir’s ideas, the movement endorsed the view that biology was not destiny. Among the achievements of second wave feminism we can count: access to contraceptives, access to careers previously granted only to men, equal pay, state support for childcare, sanctions against rape, against sexual harassment and against domestic violence. The major deficiency of both first and second wave feminist movements was their exclusive focus on issues specific solely to white, middle class women, while ignoring in most part the situation of poor women, of women of colour, of Asian women, etc.

This deficiency represented one of the triggering factors of a new movement, which emerged in the end of the 1980s and which is currently still developing: third wave feminism. However, the late 1980s marked also the rise of another trend: post-feminism. Although these two approaches appeared in the same period and both are still ongoing today, they cannot be equated. Moreover, at first sight, the differences between them often seem difficult to grasp as they both emerged as a reaction to second wave feminism. Third wave feminism focuses on differences between women that belong to different economic, social and cultural environments. Thus, the accent is put on the differences between women, not between men and women. Compared to the previous two waves, third wave feminism distances from the academic, rigorous discourse and embraces, instead, a narrative discourse (Miroiu, 2004) so

that the voices and experiences of women from various environments reach a larger audience. In the academic field, third wave feminists address gender issues by considering intersectionality.

In order to describe its view on the aftermath of second wave feminism, mass-media introduced in the late 1980s the term post-feminism (Miroiu, 2004). Given its relationship with mass-media, post-feminism was often associated with the backlash against feminism, through which the achievements of the 1970s and 1980s feminist movement is undermined (McRobbie, 2006). Post-feminism supports the idea that feminism is an outdated concept and promotes the "myth of choice" (Faludi, 2006, p. 84): nowadays women can achieve any kind of lifestyle or career path they want, as they (supposedly) benefit from equal treatment and have equal rights. Thus, post-feminism relies on a fundamental contradiction: feminism is both incorporated and mocked (Budgeon, 2011, p. 281), as it selects certain feminist views which are presented then in a simplified, mass-media-friendly manner (McRobbie, 2010, p. 31). As Faludi (2006, p. 86) stresses, advertising industry encourages the self-emancipation of women and disguises freedom of consumption as genuine autonomy. During the late 1980s, there was a backlash against feminism in the U.S. mass-media. During this period, "the term feminist was turned into the f-word and discouraged many from claiming the label" (Evans and Bobel, 2007, p. 218). It is worth mentioning, given the discussion below, that this backlash was mostly focused on the feminist *identity*, not on the feminist *movement*.

The social representation of feminism within Women Against Feminism on-line movement

One of the specific features of the study of social representations is the analysis of the "continuities and discontinuities between current and past representations" (Joffe, 1998, p. 26). Regarding the social representation of feminism in the studied group, it is worth remembering how Moscovici describes the connection between past and present within representations: "in many respects, the past is more real than the present. The strength and clarity of social representations derive from the success with which they control today's reality through yesterday's reality" (Moscovici in Hoijner, 2011, p. 6). Thus, we see that there is no shortage of terms that characterize the first wave of feminism, namely 'equal rights', 'right to vote', 'access to education', 'freedom to choose one's profession'. The characteristics that are raised are specific to the first wave and are considered already reached, which, in the view of the analysed group does not justify the presence of feminism today. Here we meet the rejection of feminism based on the idea that it has fulfilled its purpose many decades ago, and so the presence of feminism today is considered irrelevant, as it is an obsolete trend, a thing of the past – a perspective that is also contained in the current agenda of post-feminism. If we correlate this rejection of feminism with WAF supporters' demographics, we can partly explain their attitude towards feminism: because they were born in a world build by their mothers and grand-mothers' (second wave) feminist engagement.

The frequency of terms such as 'special treatment' 'privileges', 'contraception', 'traditional family' denotes that the WAF group motivates its position by understanding feminism as a simplified version that contains only the characteristics of the second wave (also called the difference feminism). While the ideals of the first wave are accepted (equal rights in the public sphere), but considered as fulfilled and therefore irrelevant, this is not the case for the ideas promoted by the second wave. The analyzed group explicitly favours equality (which

is considered the status quo in the U.S.), and vehemently rejects any trend towards tinting policies in favour of women. WAF contributors bring two separate arguments to support this view: firstly, every individual, including women, is solely responsible for his and her success and failures, secondly, policies of affirmative action for women rely on and at the same time perpetuates the idea that men are guilty of any negative issue having to do women from rape to wages and professional ascension. This opposition to the ideas of the second wave feminism can be considered a result of the reaction against feminism encountered in the mass-media sphere in the 70s and 80s.

Thus we can notice that the WAF group assigns to feminism mainly the characteristics of the second wave. There is no reference in distinguishing between the feminist waves. Many posts refer to 'modern feminism', but it is not clear what it means – the analysis above shows that this modern version strongly resembles the second wave. In reality, nowadays' feminism belongs to the third wave and its agenda is different from the second wave. First of all, present feminism distinguishes itself through a moderate attitude, and thus is less visible in the media or in social movements. Secondly, the third wave does not aim to continue the controversial aspects of the first two waves (namely its limited focus on the white, middle class women) but rather tries to include in its objectives all women and also their particular context – including family and, thus, men.

The general attitude of the WAF contributors is, as its the name implies, against feminism. Because attitudes are an expression of social representations (Bidjari, 2011, 1595), a detailed analysis of their arguments helps in understanding the social representation of the concept of feminism shared by the studied group. Furthermore, analyzing the posts on the WAF website is particularly relevant as it involves global communication, specific to the on-line environment – the posted pictures do not belong exclusively to the public from the United States, messages from other countries also appear, although rarely (of the total of 204 posts included in the analysis, two are signed by contributors from Poland and Spain). According to Markova (in Moscovici & Markova, 1998, 392), the study of social representations means the study of of language and communication – which validates the methodology used in this paper.

Recalling Moscovici's position (in Howarth, 2006) that an individual's reality is largely determined by what is socially accepted as reality explains why more than a quarter of the arguments against feminism is based on the idea that equality has been achieved, that wage differences between men and women is strictly the effect of the unwillingness of women, either on the idea that feminism has an egalitarian approach at the expense of men (almost half of the arguments raised in the posts). It also is worth noting Joffe's (1998) observation that the imposition of cultural perspectives shapes the opinions on any new phenomenon and this has the aim of maintaining the status quo in a society.

The feminist otherness and the anti-feminist identity

The theory of social representations takes into account their interdependence with the identity of individuals who form a representation of an object. In this regard, several authors, including Wagner (in Markova, 2007, p. 216), believe that social representations and social identity define each other. Regarding the issue of the order between the two notions, Markova (2007, p. 217) stresses that social representations are prior to individual identity since people are born into a world that existed before them. Thus, social identity operates with existing

representations, but as it is detailed above, social representations are formed largely on anti-thetical themes (themata), especially concerning representations of notions, concepts, etc.

However, we must not confuse social and personal identity. Personal identity refers to characteristics of people as unique individuals, while social identity emphasizes the characteristics that humans share with other members of a particular group based on categories such as gender, ethnicity, profession or political preferences (Zucker, 2004, p. 423). Thus, the shaping of the individual's social identity is determined by two types of categories: social (oriented towards the others, evaluating the groups to which they belong) and individual (personal self assessment) (Markova, 2007).

Social identity is specific to a group comprising individuals based on their similar preferences. Philogene (2007, p. 32) highlights the groups' tendency to define themselves based on the model "us vs. they" and that groups "have a tendency to define themselves in juxtaposition to others who manifestly do not belong because they are different. [...] Groups define their collective Self by presuming superiority over the Other whom they do not allow to belong". This is precisely why 'the other' plays a key role in the construction of social identity. In the case presented herein, the WAF group appeared and has become increasingly popular due to the positioning against the excluded group, namely feminists. WAF contributors define themselves in opposition to feminism and feminists. Moreover, they refuse any form of communication with feminists. This refusal to communicate with the opposed group can be explained in terms of the dual nature of alterity, as described Philogene (2007, p. 33) – "implies a dual meaning: of unfamiliarity and exclusion" where while the lack of familiarity is frequent in developing cultural otherness, exclusion is encountered in shaping social otherness.

As it can be seen from the analysis above, the WAF group appeals to stereotypes about feminism originally promoted by the media backlash against second wave feminism, namely misandry, a threat to families and femininity, the violation of principles of equality through affirmative action policies and so on. For WAF contributors, the feminist Other proves Philogene's (2007, p. 34) idea – otherness becomes a carrier of stereotypes and prejudices.

Another set of arguments frequently encountered on the WAF website, also used by 80s mass-media against feminism, is the appeal to individualism and the fact that women enjoy equal rights. While the WAF contributors promote merit on its own and are reluctant to be represented by another group of women that demands rights on their behalf, at the opposite corner we encounter the feminist identity – more research revealed that feminism is positively correlated with support for collective action (Zucker, 2004, p. 424). Moreover, exemplified in the data above (the call to individualism occurs in 23% of the 204 posts), feminists believe that women are a group who face common discrimination whereas anti-feminists believe that each individual is responsible for himself/herself (Liss et al. 2011, p. 125) and that any problem can be solved by the concerned individual (Aronson, 2003, p. 905). The refusal to take part in a collective action for solving problems specific to women is linked, in addition to individualism, to the interpretation of feminism as an anti-egalitarian movement (the invocation of the equality as an argument for rejecting feminism occurs in 25% of the 204 posts included in the analysis).

The egalitarian prospects in gender issues and their correlation with activism are often identified in other research, either qualitative or quantitative. Thus, Aronson's research was based on in-depth interviews and identified four types of attitudes towards feminism: feminist, egalitarian (often characterized by the phrase 'not a feminist, but ...'), undecided and neutral (Aronson, 2003, pp. 915-917). Egalitarians refuse to associate themselves with the la-

bel ‘feminist’, although they support many of the ideas of the movement. In addition, Aronson (2003, p. 916) noted that egalitarians do not have a collective orientation, and correlates this with the fear of being negatively perceived as aggressive, man-haters or lesbians. Zucker’s (2004, p. 432) quantitative research reveals the same trend, namely even in favourable conditions and activism, egalitarians do not distinguish from non-feminists.

Thus, the anti-feminist group Women Against Feminism builds its identity by referring to feminists, the unaccepted opposite otherness. This is exemplified by the presence in over 13% of the analysed posts of arguments directly addressing feminists, not necessarily the feminist movement. Feminists themselves become a reason for rejecting the notion of feminism, being put forward on grounds of an unpleasant personal interaction between them and WAF contributors.

The disputes in the on-line medium on the term ‘feminism’

The reactions of feminists (activists and/or experts) on the views expressed on the WAF website quickly appeared – especially in the mass-media from the United Kingdom and the United States. The tendency of the feminists who have published articles in the media as a response to the views presented by Women Against Feminism is moving towards correcting them. However, the arguments used are typical for reification, thus having a monological character and not allowing the negotiation of the meaning, as explained by Castro and Batel (2008). Deac (2008, p. 26) stresses that the aim of the sociologist “is not to educate a social group, but to summarize some of its features depending on the representation someone holds at a particular point in time, in a particular context”.

The criticisms against the arguments raised on Women Against Feminism website were mostly developed by editors and academic staff and fit into the reified universe. Because of this, they disregard the arguments through which the WAF contributors justify their anti-feminist position. Moreover, the numerous feminist or mainstream websites disapproving the way WAF contributors understand feminism recommended that the supporters of the website should document better on the term before positioning against it. The observed reaction on the WAF website was the increased mentioning of two sentences: “I know what feminism is” and “feminist does not have to tell us how to define feminism”, the latter statement being often accompanied by the antinomy equal – special treatment.

As pointed out by Castro and Batel (2009, p. 418), the existence of the two universes of knowledge, the reified and the consensual, often depends on the premise that there is a “hierarchical relation in which the universe of science is higher in value and power”. According to the two authors, the main feature of reification is “establishing prescriptions for representations” (Castro & Batel, 2009, p. 423) and that it has “monological consequences, while the use of consensualisation arguments has a more clear potential for achieving dialogical understandings” (Castro & Batel, 2009, p. 419).

The dispute over a definition of feminism or of how it should be interpreted does not have a constructive outcome, the two adverse groups end up taking the characteristics of the reified universe, where meanings of the term can not be negotiated. At the content level, the feminist critiques can be included in the scientific universe of knowledge while WAF contributors in the common sense universe of knowledge, because they use the meaning of feminism as it is employed in the lay world, where gender studies or women’s issues are not known in depth. However, in both cases the communication model corresponds to the reified

universe, and involves a monological communication, which is more pronounced in the WAF posts where the contributors explicitly reject any intention to discuss the term, whereas most response-articles suggest that these anti-the feminists need to have a proper discussion with a true feminist.

Conclusion

The research above surprised how WAF contributors represent their notion of feminism, against which they categorically position themselves. Because of the reactions of the media mentioned in the paper that criticized how this group understands the concept of feminism, I chose to analyse this case through the frame of social representations theory, in order to capture what is the social representation of the concept of feminism across the group which declares against it.

The use of the content analysis led to the identification and isolation of each term that is used as an argument for rejecting feminism. The method allowed me to observe which are the links between the terms – an aspect otherwise not intelligible by simply visiting the web-site. The research has revealed that the social representation of feminism in the on-line group WAF has numerous common elements with the way the second wave was stereotyped by the 80s media backlash against feminism, such as: feminism is an ideology that demonizes men and does not wish equality (which is a goal already accomplished), but special treatment and privileges for women, thereby ignoring the individual contribution in shaping success or decision-making. Moreover, in the same direction in common with the negative illustration of the 80s, feminism is seen as a threat to family and womanhood, and as a promoter of promiscuity. Compared to the media lynching directed against the feminist second wave, we have not met in the analysed units feminism associated with lesbianism. In addition, we can observe the call to the cult of individualism, WAF contributors mentioning in nearly a quarter of posts that they do not need to be represented by anyone else and that women must resolve their own problems and build their success on merit, not on the basis of their gender.

In sum, the paper showed that the social representation of feminism for the studied group relies on four, often coexistent, pillars: (1) feminists are aggressive misandrists, (2) feminism destroys traditional gender roles and through this also endangers society at large by rejecting the traditional family, (3) feminism does not mean equality, but preferential treatment for women, (4) feminism promotes a lack of responsibility and considers women unable to solve their own problems and instead supports solutions from a collective movement.

By assuming an explicitly attitude against feminism (all posts begin with the syntagm "I am not a feminist because"), WAF contributors do not qualify as post-feminists, although at the first sight the two categories share some similarities. While post-feminists can be easily identified and characterised by the already famous expression "I am not a feminist, but ...", WAF contributors categorically reject any feminist resemblance and instead prefer either to be labelled as "humanist" or "egalitarian", either to be strong supporters of the traditional gender roles.

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