

# Gender and Brexit

the performance of toxic masculinity in House of Commons debates during the Brexit process



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Bachelor Thesis

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3 July 2020

*[door docent op te nemen op elk voorblad van tentamens]*

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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the extent to which there is a difference in the performance of toxic masculinity in the House of Commons debates concerning Brexit with either Theresa May or Boris Johnson as PM. To do so, a discourse analysis is conducted. Two debates that were part of the Brexit process are analysed to investigate the extent of toxic masculine performance. In the end, the hypothesis that there would be more toxic masculinity during the debate Johnson was PM in than the debate May was PM in was confirmed based on an analysis of the used vocabulary, non-verbal communication and the content of both debates.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Several popular media platforms have been addressing the connection between toxic masculinity and Brexit since the beginning of the Brexit process. “What Brexit means for men: A toxic situation” (The Book of Man, 2018), “Brexit is lost in toxic masculinity. No wonder women are turning against it” (Bennett, 2018), and “How leaders like Boris Johnson took toxic masculinity in politics to terrifying new heights” (Walsh, 2019) are the type of headings that are seen quite frequently these days. Like the popular media, academics have started to investigate all kinds of aspects of the dynamic Brexit process. One of those aspects is gender, specifically toxic masculinity – a term used in academic research that surrounded “gender-based violence, misogyny and the abuse of women in private and public life” (Daddow & Hertner, 2019, p. 1). The question that still needs to be answered is how toxic masculinity is displayed in British politics, and whether this differs depending on the gender of the prime minister (“PM”). Firstly, this chapter will be dealing with Brexit as a national crisis and the expected increase of toxic masculinity. Secondly, it will tackle the current research, especially paying attention to a) gendered effects on men and women and b) the underrepresentation of women in British politics, both PMs and members of parliament (“MP”). Then, it will look at how this thesis will investigate the way in which toxic masculinity plays a role in MP-PM interaction during times of crisis like Brexit.

### **1.1 Historical, societal and cultural background**

Historically, the EU and the UK have had a turbulent relationship. The outcome of the Brexit referendum in 2016 may have come as a surprise to some people. However, the lead-up to the referendum and outcome is quite visible in recent UK history. 1973, the year the UK entered the European Economic Community (the predecessor of the EU), could be seen as the starting point of both the UK's career as an EU member state and early euroscepticism amongst the British population. The term euroscepticism was first coined mid-1980s by UK journalists as a reaction to the Single European Act, which was the moment it was decided the EU would now also pay attention to societal issues as opposed to having a sole focus on the single market (Leruth, Startin & Usherwood, 2017, p. 4). Politically, the rise of Nigel Farage and UKIP in 2006 illustrates the extent to which euroscepticism was still present amongst the UK population during the 2000s (The Guardian, 1 February 2020).

Economically, 1992 was the year in which the relationship between Europe and the UK hit one of the lowest points because the pound devalued and was forced out of the European

Exchange Rate Mechanism. This relationship remained poor as the number of eastern European migrants in the UK increased from 2004 (The Guardian, 1 February 2020). Part of the British population felt that the migrants were taking their jobs which they thought to be very unfair. The increase of migrants had both economical and cultural repercussions for many Britons. Culturally, it is quite noticeable that the British population has always felt a disconnect with the European identity. Cultural Euroscepticism has been a continuous aspect of British society. It is also one of the things that eventually led to the referendum in 2016. 23 June 2016 was thus the definite date on which the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. Ever since that date, the UK government has been seeking a way to realise this wish from the UK population. Economic elements (i.e. trading agreements) have been dominating both the political discussion and the media. Social issues like women's rights are structurally neglected. This is logical considering the UK joined the EU in 1973 with one sole motivation: taking advantage of the single market. Besides the relationship between the UK and the EU, the UK also has an interesting relationship with female politicians. One of the first obvious observations to make about this is that the UK has only had two female PMs whilst there have been 75 male PMs throughout history<sup>1</sup> (GOV.UK, n.d.). One of those female PMs, Margaret Thatcher, might have been a woman, but did not make any attempt to make the political climate in the UK any more welcoming to women (Lovenduski, 1994, p. 303). Nevertheless, the participation of women in UK politics, specifically the House of Commons, has bettered. 220 female MPs (so 34%) were elected to have a seat in parliament last December, which is the most female MPs the House of Commons has ever known. However, almost two-thirds of seats (429 in total) are still represented by men.

## 1.2 State of current research

Because Brexit is a relatively recent affair<sup>2</sup>, the academic research available is unfortunately limited. Though there is some research available, the topic of gendered discourse in the

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<sup>1</sup> GOV.UK (n.d.) names Sir Robert Walpole as the first UK PM from 1721 and 1742. Of course, times were quite different for women and politics then, so you could say 75 male PMs versus two female PM is not a fair comparison. Those numbers are just used to create an image of the difference between the position of males and the position of females in UK politics.

<sup>2</sup> This statement, of course, depends on how the Brexit process is viewed: it could be claimed that the first eurosceptic tendencies in the UK started after the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 when the EU engaged in a more social political programme instead of a solely economic programme. It could even be said that the first euroscepticism started after 1975, when the UK held its very first EU referendum and the Labour party had to campaign pro-EU against their will. It is however in case of this thesis convenient to agree on the Brexit process starting in the fall of 2016 when the referendum was held.

Brexit process is a niche and therefore offers a limited amount of articles. Nonetheless, Achilleos-Sarll & Martill (2019) have addressed toxic masculinity and the performance of Brexit, addressing the gendered perspective about the discourses that surround the Brexit campaign (Achilleos-Sarll & Martill, 2019, p. 15). They found that the language used in Brexit discourse could be associated with 1) militarism and 2) “business interests and ‘deal-making’ rhetoric” (Achilleos-Sarll & Martill, 2019, p. 16). Higgins (2020) also writes about Brexit discourse being associated with militarism. He, however, goes more in depth and nuances the subject by addressing topics like performative masculinity. Academically, there have been two ways to look at the connection between gender and Brexit. One is more focused on the gendered political effects Brexit has on the female population of the UK. It worries about how women will be protected under UK law after EU social laws will not apply to UK women anymore. The other is more focused on the gendered discourse surrounding Brexit. It looks at how gendered language was used in campaigns, debates, press and other media.

### **1.3 Research question**

The research question is as follows: to what extent is there a difference in the performance of toxic masculinity in the House of Commons debates concerning Brexit with either Theresa May or Boris Johnson as PM? The study is exploratory in nature. Finding out whether there is a difference in the presence of toxic masculinity concerning Brexit with either Theresa May or Boris Johnson as PM will provide some crucial information regarding the more general differences in the treatment of men and women in the UK political system. It may reveal some information regarding the biases of political decisions made in the House of Commons. It could also provide some inside information on why some seats in the House of Commons are represented by people of certain genders (i.e. why the majority of the seats are still represented by men aside from the historical evolution of the UK political climate) and what characteristics fit the MP profile. Furthermore, this study could also be the basis of further investigation into the same issues regarding different political topics like migration or climate change. It could also be applied to other nations or political systems to see whether specific patterns return once the conditions are manipulated. The study can thus function as a starting point for other investigations regarding gendered discourse in politics.

#### **1.4 Summary of methodology and theoretical framework**

To investigate the research question, a discourse analysis of two Brexit debates will be conducted. One debate has May as PM, the other has Johnson as PM. The aim is to find out whether the gender of the PM influences the extent to which toxic masculinity is performed in the House of Commons. This research is supported by theories concerning gender (specifically toxic masculinity) and politics.

#### **1.5 Thesis outline**

The thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 1 contains the general introduction, context, current research, research question and hypothesis. Chapter 2 contains the foundation of the research, so the theoretical framework and methodology. Chapter 3 contains some general data concerning both the debates. This data is useful as additional information for the research. Chapter 4 contains the discourse analysis and is divided into three subcategories: vocabulary, non-verbal communication, and content. Chapter 5 contains the conclusion.

#### **1.6 Hypothesis**

The preliminary hypothesis is that, even if the toxic nature of the House of Commons is taken into account, there will be a more prominent performance of toxic masculinity in the debate with Johnson as PM than with May as PM.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical framework & methodology

### **2.1 Gender and Brexit**

Looking at the relationship between gender and Brexit by analysing the presence of toxic masculinity in Brexit debates is unfortunately only scratching the surface of the depth of said relationship. The relationship between the UK as a nation and gender as a social concept knows many different sides and can be studied by looking at certain different aspects. One of those aspects is the UK in an EU context. During its EU membership, the UK has continuously shown behaviour that was not very pro-women. A specific example of this was the UK's attitude towards the renewed maternity legislation that were proposed in the EU. As of now, UK women are protected by some EU legislation which will not be in effect anymore when the UK leaves the EU. According to Guerrina & Masselot (2018), the business interests of UK employers were prioritised over women's rights during the EU debates surrounding the new maternity legislation (p. 322). Although the UK had legislation that protected discrimination on the basis of sex on the work floor, pregnant women were not protected by this legislation as pregnant women were an exception on the rule. This was because no comparison could be made between them and their male counterpart, simply because men generally cannot get pregnant. Although the Pregnant Workers Directive was eventually passed on the EU level, the national implementation of the policy was still not ideal as business interests continued to be prioritised over maternity rights (Guerrina & Masselot, 2018, p. 323). Though this is just one example, it reinforces a clear image that is representative of the UK's attitude towards other EU issues concerning women's rights. This is quite worrisome because, once the EU legislation that protects women is lifted, there is no way to be sure of the extent to which UK women will from then on be protected by national legislation.

Another prominent aspect of the relationship between gender and Brexit can be found in the campaigns and press surrounding Brexit. This is perhaps more in line with the approach taken in this thesis as it also looks at discourse surrounding Brexit. A media platform that is an excellent example of this is The Book of Man, a self-described new-media brand. They have published an article called "Why Brexit is Bad for Men" on 6 June 2018. This article succeeds in addressing how the discourse surrounding Brexit is gendered, rather than only looking at the politically gendered effects Brexit has on UK women. It describes how Boris Johnson (conservative), Nigel Farage (UKIP), David Davis (conservative), and

Michael Gove (conservative) are quite toxic by stating they represent “a narrow masculinity that prizes ruthlessness, promiscuity, boozing and fighting” (The Book of Man, 2018). It also addresses how Theresa May’s expression of femininity is interpreted by some people as failure.

## 2.2 Theoretical framework

### 2.2.1 Toxic Masculinity

According to Daddow & Hertner (2019), the term “toxic masculinity” was invented about thirty years ago by the academic community. In different academic fields, different dimensions of the term are more important than others, but it generally inhibits “one particular performance of masculinity (...) located at the most corrosive and violent end (...) of hegemonic masculinity” (p. 2). Hegemonic masculinity, according to Childs & Hughes cited in Daddow & Hertner (2019), is a more general form of masculinity that already legitimates the idea that women are subordinate to men, so toxic masculinity taking it even further is quite extreme. Key concepts associated with toxic masculinity are sexual violence, misogyny, rape, bottling up emotions, limited empathy for others, male domination over women, privilege, power, subordination and oppression.

When it comes to the political climate, toxic masculinity plays a role in all the types and levels of political relationships (Connell (2014), cited in Daddow & Hertner, 2019, p. 2). Toxic masculinity is all about creating an environment that is beneficial to the toxic masculinist, because it allows them to generate an institutional advantage (Ritchie (2019), cited in Daddow & Hertner, 2019, p. 2) . It is difficult to concretize toxic masculinity in politics, because it is embedded in different components of the political system. Daddow & Hertner (2019) built a framework that contains elements surrounding the topic of toxic masculine party culture. When looking at discourse, specifically a few of this framework’s components are useful. Discourse can be qualified as toxic masculine when women are “demeaned, unsupported, excluded, undermined or harassed”, when there is evidence of “verbally and physically aggressive behaviour”, when there is rejection or discrimination, and when traditional male and female roles are enforced, promoted or glorified (p. 3).

### 2.2.2 Gender and Politics

It turns out that it is quite common for women to appear in leadership positions when times are difficult. After most of the problems are solved, a man will take over again. Chowdhury

et al. (1994) touched upon this briefly by stating that times of crisis like war, revolution or economic distress result in a temporary increase of the involvement of women in political activity (p. 16). Rink et al. (2012) defined the phenomenon of glass cliff as “the tendency for women to be overrepresented in precarious leadership positions that involve a high risk of failure because of organisational circumstances” (p. 1306), hereby recognising the findings presented in Chowdhury et al. (1994). They also found that crisis times lead the traditional “think manager-think male” mentality to shift towards a “think crisis-think female” mentality (p. 1307). Ryan et al. (2010) also confirms that women are more likely to take leadership positions in times of crisis (p. 56). It is interesting to note that the findings of these studies are reflected by the Brexit process - after David Cameron announced his resignation on 24 June 2016, Theresa May became PM. It can of course not conclusively be said that Theresa May’s prime ministership can be attributed to glass cliff, but it is worth noting she is only the second female PM ever. Additionally, Brexit is generally viewed as a national crisis, which would fit the think crisis-think female mentality as proposed by Chowdhury et al. (1994).

When digging deeper into the topic of female participation in UK politics, the poor position of women regarding politics becomes even more apparent. Historically, the UK was one of Europe’s countries that was most resistant to the idea of women engaging in politics (Lovenduski, 1994, p. 300). This resulted in a lack of female politicians, which can be partially attributed to the design of Britain’s political institutions. They were designed by men and appeared to suit men a lot better than women (Lovenduski, 1994, p. 301). Autonomous radical feminists did try to tackle the issue of male sexual violence during the 1980s (Lovenduski, 1994, p. 301). They did so to better the female position in the political climate. However, these radical feminists also tended to reject the political institutions as a whole, which resulted in no change. This was because they left the political institutions for what it was, choosing to fight their battles elsewhere. Though some feminists did seek public office, their efforts were very slow to cause actual change as the rules of the political game were still designed for male MPs, making it more difficult for women to secure a political voice (Lovenduski, 1994, p. 301). Both Rink et al. (2012) and Ryan et al. (2010) provide information on the fact that female candidates in the UK were more likely to run for hard-to-win seats. Ryan et al. (2010) illustrates a way in which the Labour party has recognised this phenomenon and tries to avoid it with regards to their own candidates (p. 57), but that does not solve the overall problem of lack of female participation in UK politics.

As May was only the second female PM, it is easy ground to compare her to Margaret Thatcher. On the surface level, it seems that they have a lot in common - they both arose

during times of crisis - Thatcher had to deal with high unemployment rates and an economic recession whilst May had to deal with Brexit. They are furthermore both amongst the rare number of female conservative politicians, and they had a similar middle England, Christian upbringing (Goodlad, 2018, p. 13). It is, on the contrary, their differences that are actually more interesting. May has been way more socially progressive than Thatcher was. Whereas May actively promoted the adoption of more female conservatory parliamentary candidates through initiatives like “women2win”, Thatcher did not promote the increase of women in politics as she felt that they should be able to get there by themselves, because she had managed to do so, too (Goodlad, 2018, p. 13). The biggest differences can be found when looking at how they were perceived and treated by others. May, generally, has been perceived as being less extreme than Thatcher: “May [has not] aroused the extremes of adoration and loathing associated with Thatcher” (Goodlad, 2018, p. 14). Secondly, Thatcher has been perceived as a way more dominant figure whereas May has been perceived as the practical opposite. Goodlad (2018) describes May’s image as “luckless” and “misfortunate” whilst Thatcher’s image was characterised by the words “vicious” and “dominant” (p. 14).

## **2.3 Methodology**

### 2.3.1 Discourse analysis

As a means of discovering whether toxic masculinity is performed in different House of Commons debates, a discourse analysis will be conducted. A discourse analysis, according to Halperin & Heath (2012), is “a qualitative type of analysis that explores the ways in which discourses give legitimacy and meaning to social practices and institutions” (p. 309). In this case, a discourse analysis on two different House of Commons debates will be conducted to find out whether toxic masculinity is performed in different House of Commons contexts, and how the performance of toxic masculinity differs depending on the presence of a male or female PM.

### 2.3.2 Materials

The data used in this research comes from two debates that were held during the Brexit process. The first of the two debates was held when Theresa May was PM, the second was held when Boris Johnson was PM. The reason for choosing these two debates is to contrast the debates on the basis of gender. Boris Johnson and Theresa May are, besides their gender, relatively comparative people, being that they are both white, conservative, around the same

age, and have an upper-middle class background. In Chapter 3 and 4, “Statement on Leaving the European Union” from 22 May 2019 will be analysed and discussed (also referred to “the May debate” in this thesis). The debate is approximately 1,5 hours long and Theresa May is PM during this debate. In Chapter 3 and 4, the debate “EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill” from 20 December 2019 will also be discussed (also referred to as “the Johnson debate” in this thesis). This debate is approximately 4 hours long and Boris Johnson is PM. These debates were made available on YouTube. To support the investigation, two transcripts of the debates were used as well: Hansard (2019) for the May debate, and MySociety (2019) for the Johnson debate. These transcripts mainly helped to identify the speakers and the parties they represented. It also helped to analyse the content when the sound quality of the videos was poor. During the investigation, two tables containing time stamps, speakers’ names, genders, and party affiliations were made (appendices 1 and 2). These helped to connect specific observations to specific speakers, genders or parties.

### 2.3.3 Context

Halperin and Heath (2012) stress the importance of historical and social contexts when conducting a discourse analysis. In this specific case, the historical context that is relevant to the discourse analysis is the conversational codes and conventions surrounding House of Commons debates. Toye (2014) has provided some information on the rhetorical culture and its origins of the House of Commons. Though not all aspects of the rhetorical culture of the House of Commons can be classified as beneficial or disadvantageous for male or female MPs, it is important to keep all aspects in mind while conducting the discourse analysis. Otherwise, some aspects of House of Commons debates might be wrongfully interpreted as toxic masculine performance. There are five external aspects that have influenced the manner of discourse in the House of Commons: the layout of the chamber, the class history of the parties and MPs in the House of Commons, the formal rules of procedure, the informal expectations of MPs and the press. Concerning the layout of the chamber, the atmosphere is “both adversarial and intimate” as there is little space and the benches are narrow. This results in a more conversational style of speaking instead (Toye, 2014, p. 277). Regarding class history, there has been debate on to what extent the “House of Commons manner” (“hesitation, eh-ahing and a crowd of clichés of the ‘venture to suggest’, ‘make bold to say’ sort”) should be permitted (Toye, 2014, p. 279). On the one hand, “the possession of a strong voice is a great asset (...), where a member often has to contend against (...) leather-lunged interruptions”, but on the other hand, a certain variety of forcefulness was not

welcomed (Toye, 2014, p. 279) In theory, male MPs would thus have an easier time communicating their arguments in the House, because men naturally have voices that cut through noise more easily. Furthermore, the formal rules of procedure were so complex that hardly any MP knew them fully, resulting in the development of informal expectations of MPs. An example of this is the unspoken rule that, “if one was planning to attack another member, it was the done thing to notify them in advance” (Toye, 2014, p. 281). This is also beneficial to male MPs, because they make up the largest majority of the House, enabling them to form informal bonds with each other more easily.

#### 2.3.4 Analysis

*Table 1: list of characteristics of toxic masculine discourse*

<i>Level of communication</i>	<i>What is analysed</i>	<i>Elements of toxic masculinity</i>
Vocabulary	Ideological associations, formality, euphemistic/metaphorical content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Misogynistic speech</li> <li>● Demeaning speech</li> </ul> When female politicians experience... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No support</li> <li>● Exclusion</li> <li>● Undermining</li> <li>● Verbal harassment</li> </ul>
Non-verbal communication	Tone of voice, pauses, gestures, intentions, attitudes, emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aggression</li> <li>● Demeaning body language</li> <li>● Demeaning tone of voice</li> <li>● Raising of voice</li> </ul>

According to Halperin and Heath (2012), the goal of discourse analysis is “to explore the relationship between discourse and reality in particular context” (p. 313). In this case, the discourse will be analysed in two different contexts: one with a female PM, one with a male PM. All other aspects of the context are comparable.. The analysis will take place in the following manner: in order to explore the extent to which toxic masculinity is performed during the two different debates, a list of elements of typical toxic masculine discourse will be established (see table 1). The list is based on Luo (23 August 2019), Daddow & Hertner (2019), UK Parliament (22 May 2019), and UK Parliament (12 December 2019). The first two academic sources explore the different characteristics of toxic masculinity in speech and

non-verbal communication. The debates are viewed and checked on containing aspects of toxic masculine discourse.

## Chapter 3: General data

### **3.1 Data on the debates**

#### 3.1.1 The May debate

The debate titled “Statement on Leaving the European Union” was held on 22 May 2019, when Theresa May was still PM. The length of the debate is approximately 1.5 hours. The subject of the debate was the new Withdrawal Agreement Bill that was recently made up. The PM, amongst other things, said the following:

We need to see Brexit through, to honour the result of the referendum and to deliver the change the British so clearly demanded. I sincerely believe that most members of this House feel the same; that for all our division and disagreement, we believe in democracy, that we want to make good on the promise we made to the British people when we asked them to decide on our EU membership. (News from Parliament, 2019).

She then introduced the House to her ‘ten point offer’, a Brexit deal containing ten pointers. Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition, was the first to react. After he reacted to May’s proposal, other MPs were offered the chance to ask the PM questions on her new offer or express their concerns regarding either the new deal or the whole Brexit process. The PM responded to each and every remark the MPs made. A small yet important detail is that the European elections would take place the day after this debate.

#### 3.1.2 The Johnson debate

The debate titled “EU Withdrawal Bill” was held on 20 December 2019, with Boris Johnson as PM. The length of the debate is approximately four hours. The subject of the debate was, similar to the other debate, once again a new Withdrawal Agreement Bill. Boris Johnson, in an effort to stimulate the House to vote in favour of his newest bill, said (amongst other things) that the old labels of leave and remain should be disregarded (UK Parliament, 2019, 20 December). He also said the following:

Now is the time to act together as one reinvigorated nation, one United Kingdom, filled with renewed confidence in our national destiny and determined, at last, to take advantage of the opportunities that now lie before us. The whole purpose of our withdrawal agreement is to set this in motion and avoid any further delay (MySociety, 2019).

In his opening speech, Boris Johnson gave several MPs, amongst others Joanna Cherry (SNP) and Owen Paterson (conservative), the opportunity to speak. He used their remarks as handles to support his opening speech. Hereafter, Jeremy Corbyn was once again given the opportunity to react to the new bill. Similar to the other debate, MPs were then given the chance to express their opinions on the new bill. Unlike the other debate, however, Boris Johnson did not respond to all remarks by other MPs. He, not once, stood up to react or express his feelings regarding the other MPs' remarks, instead having his fellow Tories defend the new bill.

### 3.2 Data on speakers: gender and party affiliation

#### 3.2.1 The May debate

The total number of speakers during Leaving the European Union was 52, of which 15 women and 37 men. This means that 28.8% of the speakers was female. The percentage of female MPs at the time of the debate was 32% (Watson, Uberoi, & Kirk-Wade, 2020), so slightly more, but not shockingly more. In table 2, the number of male/female speakers and their respective parties has been depicted.

*Table 2: gender and party affiliation of speakers during the May debate.*

	Female	Male	Total	Total [%]
Conservative	3	14	17	32.7%
Labour	9	9	18	34.6%
Liberal Democrats	1	3	4	7.7%
Nationalist Parties <sup>3</sup>	2	8	10	19.2%

#### 3.2.2 The Johnson debate

The total number of speakers during the Johnson debate was 56, of which 15 women and 41 men. This means that 26.8% of the speakers were female - slightly less than during the May debate. The percentage of female MPs at the time of the debate was 34% (Duncan & Busby, 2019, 13 December). It is interesting to note that, although the total of female MPs went up after the election in December 2019, the number of female speakers in a debate has gone down. The difference becomes more extreme if the speakers who spoke multiple times during

<sup>3</sup> Nationalist parties, in this case, include SNP, DUP, and Plaid Cymru.

the debate are included - so not just counting the individual participants, but counting all the times a male or female spoke. It is then the case that female MPs spoke 19 times whilst male MPs spoke 66 times, meaning 22.4% of the time an MP spoke, they were female. In table 3, the number of male/female speakers and their respective parties has been depicted.

*Table 3: gender and party affiliation of speakers during the Johnson debate.*

	Female	Male	Total	Total [%]
Conservative	4	23	27	48.2%
Labour	7	8	15	26.8%
Liberal Democrats	1	0	1	1.9%
Nationalist Parties <sup>4</sup>	2	9	11	19.6%
Other	1	1	2	3.8%

### 3.2.3 Comparison

As mentioned previously, there is a notable difference between the female speakers' percentage compared to the total percentage of female MPs in the House of Commons during the Johnson debate. When the same comparison is made between the female speakers during the May debate and the total percentage of female MPs in the House of Commons at the time May was PM, no notable difference is seen.

Table 4a reflects the percentages of different genders and their respective parties during both debates. During both debates, the conservatives had more speakers, both male and female. Though the difference between percentages of male conservative speakers is quite large, all other groups have percentages that are quite close to each other. Thus, no viable observations or conclusions regarding the differences between male and female MPs can be drawn from these observations.

Table 4b also reflects the percentages of different genders and their respective parties during both debates, but differently (see footnotes 5 and 6). Looking at these results, it seems to be the case that during the Johnson debate, there were way more conservative males than during the May debate. It, too, seems to be the case that there were way more labour females during the May debate than during the Johnson debate. The percentages of conservative females and labour males are way closer to each other.

<sup>4</sup> Nationalist parties, in this case, include SNP, DUP, SDLP and APNI.

*Table 4a: conservative and labour MPs and gender during both debates (specific genders)<sup>5</sup>*

	Conservative female MPs	Conservative male MPs	Labour female MPs	Labour male MPs
The May debate	20%	37.8%	60%	24.3%
The Johnson debate	26.7%	56.1%	46.7%	19.5%

*Table 4b: conservative and labour MPs and gender during both debates (total speakers)<sup>6</sup>*

	Conservative female MPs	Conservative male MPs	Labour female MPs	Labour male MPs
The May debate	5.8%	26.9%	17.3%	17.3%
The Johnson debate	7.14%	41.1%	12.5%	14.3%

<sup>5</sup> Percentages reflect the percentage of the specific gender, so not of the total speakers. For example, 20% conservative female MPs during the May debate means that 20% of the female speakers during the May debate were conservative, not that 20% of the total speakers were conservative women.

<sup>6</sup> Percentages reflect the percentage of the total speakers. For example, 5.8% conservative female MPs during the May debate means that 5.8% of all speakers during the May debate were conservative women.

## Chapter 4: Discourse analysis

At the surface level, it becomes clear very quickly that there is a larger presence of performance of toxic masculinity during the Johnson debate than the May debate. The first glance at the May debate was very useful in terms of establishing a general idea of male and female discourse. Male MPs tend to generally speak with more dominance, or even aggression, refusing to give way or be interrupted. An example of this was Bill Cash (conservative) during the Johnson debate [2:22:16] (UK Parliament, 2019, 20 December). MPs that provided great examples of typical female discourse during the May debate were Vicky Ford (conservative) and Caroline Flint (labour). They both had a steady and calm pace when addressing Mr Speaker or the PM and remained quite polite the whole time. Catherine McKinnell (labour) displayed the same speaking manners as Ford and Flint during the Johnson debate. Generally speaking, there was more apparent female unfriendly behaviour during the Johnson debate. It seemed to be the case that female MPs were sometimes not given way because male MPs were allowed to speak first. Another observation was that a lot of MPs left the chamber when a female MP (Maria Miller, *conservative*) was given the turn to speak. It was also the case that some female MPs suffered more from the fussing backbenchers when trying to make their statements than their male colleagues did. Bill Cash even made some content-related female unfriendly remarks by saying “the working man was given the right to vote in 1867” [2:17:58] (MySociety, 2019), hereby not acknowledging women are part of the workforce nor acknowledging the importance of women’s right to vote by naming the year only men were given voting rights. However, more in-depth analyses need to be carried out to be able to draw conclusions regarding the performance of toxic masculinity in the House of Commons debates. The results were divided into three categories: two of which were based on the characteristics of toxic masculinity as established in the methodology, and a third based on the actual content of the debates.

### **4.1 Vocabulary**

There were several instances where the choice of specific words did greatly affect how certain statements came across. There were no instances of verbal harassment as this is against the House of Commons rules and conventions. At a certain point, Mr Speaker corrected Jacob Rees-Mogg (conservative) as he used the word “nasty” to refer to something May said [May debate - 1:06:30] (Hansard, 2019). At another point, Luke Graham

(conservative) loudly yelled to assumably be given way, but Mr Speaker corrected him as well:

Order. This is a most extraordinary situation. [Robert Neill] is seeking to ask a question in a seemly way and is effectively being heckled and prevented from doing so by the chuntering from a sedentary position in pursuit of Scottish tribal warfare by [Luke Graham]. Calm yourself, man. The PM is perfectly capable of looking after herself. She was asked a question and she has given an answer. (...) The hon. Gentleman has not in any way benefited the mix by his disorderly chunter. [May debate - 00:53:15] (Hansard, 2019).

Though there seems to be no apparent verbal harassment, there have been several instances during which female MPs or May herself do not receive support from male MPs or even male party members. At some point, Iain Duncan Smith (conservative) is criticising May, his own party member. This is remarkable as MPs from the same party usually have each other's back during debates. He is trying to expose the faults in the new bill she is proposing:

Having presented this statement at the Dispatch Box, is the PM absolutely certain that she will bring the Bill to the House for Second Reading? If so, could she name the date now and then say she will stick to it? [May debate - 00:23:10] (Hansard, 2019).

The way Iain Duncan Smith phrases his critique is not very pleasant. The way he chooses his words seems to imply he doubts the PM's genuineness. He does not support her even though they are both conservatives. The second sentence also reflects his lack of trust in her, as he is very demanding in the way he *now* wants a date and a promise. Further on in the debate, when talking about the deadline, Hilary Benn (labour) uses the phrasing "can I *urge* [May] to take that one final step?" [May debate - 00:29:36] (Hansard, 2019). Although less strong than Smith's phrasing, the verb "urge" still suggests that the addresser, in this case Benn, seems to think that he knows better than the addressee, in this case May. Later on in the debate, Edward Leigh (conservative) speaks and uses the phrasing "I ask the PM to be very cautious" [May debate - 1:02:30] (Hansard, 2019), implying he does not believe that she is being cautious in the first place, hereby suggesting he questions her political abilities. Yvette Cooper (labour) speaks about the PM as well, but uses different phrasing: "can she tell us: has the Cabinet ruled out a long-term customs union being part of the future partnership with the EU?" [May debate - 00:32:20] (Hansard, 2019). Instead of urging May to act one way or another (like Benn did), she - quite politely - phrases her request into a formal question. Nicky Morgan (conservative), who spoke right after Cooper, also does this:

I will probably vote for the Bill when it comes back, but please can I ask the PM to reflect very carefully on whether it should be put to Parliament, because the consequences of its not being passed are very serious? [May debate - 00:34:18] (Hansard, 2019).

She starts her remark off with the reassuring comment that she will probably vote in favour, and then asks the PM to ‘reflect very carefully’. This phrasing indicates very different intentions than Benn’s or Leigh’s. A third woman mirroring this behaviour is Helen Goodman (labour):

I would like to ask her the same question about the customs arrangements, which she knows are extremely important for [the] manufacturing industry. Would it be her plan to offer a free vote on those customs arrangements? [May debate - 1:00:55] (Hansard, 2019).

Though Goodman’s opinion on the issue addressed becomes very clear in her statement, she remains polite and asks the PM certain questions, instead of offering unwanted advice. When looking at the Johnson debate no phrasing comparable to Benn’s or Leigh’s can be found. For some reason, it appears to be the case that the MPs during the Johnson debate seem to trust or support Johnson more than the MPs did May. Owen Paterson (conservative), for example, asks the PM: “Will [Johnson] guarantee that we will not make the mistake of the 1970s (...)? Will he guarantee that we will become a normal independent maritime nation (...)?” [Johnson debate - 00:22:10] (MySociety, 2019). The politeness and lack of scepticism regarding Johnson could possibly be contributed to the fact that both Paterson and Johnson are conservatives, if it were not for the fact that Ian Blackford from SNP mirrors Paterson’s phrasing: “will [Johnson] accept that the devolved Administrations have the right to withhold their legislative consent? Will he now enter into constructive dialogue with those who seek to defend our rights (...)?” [Johnson debate - 00:52:07] (MySociety, 2019). Although the content of his statement makes clear that he does not agree with Johnson, his phrasing is still polite like Paterson’s. And though we saw a difference in how male and female MPs phrased their statements during the May debate, this does not seem to be the case in the Johnson debate. This is confirmed by Caroline Lucas (green):

But I tell you what does undermine democracy, and that is a Bill that is essentially an Executive power grab, completely deleting all of the provisions that would have allowed for parliamentary scrutiny. Can he explain why, if he is standing up for democracy, he is happy to see a Bill that is reducing democracy? [Johnson debate - 1:21:04] (UK Parliament, 2019, 20 December).

Similar to Blackford, it is clear that Lucas is not happy with the decisions Johnson has made, and her questioning whether he is happy to see a bill that reduces democracy can even be interpreted as cynical or at least as a rhetorical question, but her phrasing does not reflect this cynical and negative view as she, like Paterson and Blackford, remains polite. Lastly, one individual who showed quite demeaning speech in both the May and the Johnson debate, was Bill Cash (conservative). In the May debate, he states the following:

The PM tells us that, if MPs vote for the withdrawal agreement Bill—which we have not even seen, let alone the amendments that will be tabled to it—we would leave the European Union by 31 July. How on earth does she know that? [May debate - 00:31:18] (Hansard, 2019).

Like Benn, it is quite worrisome that another male conservative seems to not support her. The phrasing “how on earth does she know” does imply that he questions her legitimacy and trustworthiness as a politician. He could have phrased it like “what instances gave her the idea that ...” or “how did the PM acquire this information”, but he did not. In the Johnson debate, it was even clearer. Responding to the statement given by Wera Hobhouse (female liberal democrat), he said:

As someone who has been Chairman of the European Scrutiny Committee for 10 years, and a member of that Committee for 34 years, I can say that I do know a tiny bit about what has been going on. [Johnson debate - 2:15:36] (MySociety, 2019).

Though, of course, his chairmanship of the ESC and membership of the committee do give him some authority, the way he phrased the second part of the sentence was very condescending and demeaning towards Hobhouse. By using this phrasing, he seems to completely deny Hobhouse’ authority and voice because she might not be as experienced as he is.

## **4.2 Non-verbal communication**

### 4.2.1 House of Commons conventions

Quite a lot of non-verbal elements of toxic masculine discourse were present during both the debates. This characteristic of toxic masculine discourse was harder to qualify, as some of the evidence could be attributed to House of Commons conventions. Take, for example, the sometimes increasing fussing in the background as certain MPs speak, or even yelling as a means to support the current speaker. An example of this took place during the Johnson debate, when an SNP MP supported Ian Blackford’s statement by continuously yelling “why

are you doing this?!” or “why is [clause 37] in there?!” [Johnson debate - 00:57:26] (UK Parliament, 2019, 20 December). Because these types of speech could easily be interpreted as aggression, one must be careful to directly classify these instances as toxic masculine performance.

#### 4.2.2 Boris Johnson

The first individual who had very clear non-verbal indicators of toxic masculine performance was Boris Johnson himself. Theresa May always had a very active attitude of listening. She always paid attention to what every MP had to say and had a witty and quick response to all speakers, regardless of the speaker’s gender or the party they represented. Johnson, on the other hand, had several instances in which his body language was very demeaning, especially when female MPs were speaking. At his opening statement, it already quickly became clear that he could more easily make himself heard than May could, because of the natural pitch and timbre of his male voice, proving the findings of Toye (2014) concerning the benefits of possessing a strong voice in the House of Commons. During his opening statement, he then only proceeds to give way to MPs that benefit his opening statement, ignoring MPs asking him to give way if it is inconvenient to him. Whereas May rarely refused to give way to an MP, Johnson simply yells “no” and continues his statement on at least two occasions during the debate. One of these instances, it was Caroline Lucas asking Johnson to give way, in the other instance it was not clear who it was but it was a woman’s voice asking to give way. It is easy to believe that Johnson refuses to give way to female MPs whilst giving way to male MPs. In this debate, he did give way to Jonathan Edwards (independent), Owen Paterson (conservative) and Gavin Robinson (DUP), but also to Joanna Cherry (SNP) and Lisa Nandy (labour). Johnson giving way to the latter two makes the aforementioned claim regarding Johnson being reluctant to give way to female MPs inconclusive. Aside from his giving-way habits, Johnson was seen several times during the debate either verbally protesting what was said, or not listening to what was said. During Jeremy Corbyn’s response to Johnson’s new bill, Johnson yelled out “come on!” while being visibly irritated, holding up his hands and shaking his head [Johnson debate - 00:33:59] (UK Parliament, 2019, 20 December). He repeats this behaviour a couple of times, a few minutes later, almost ridiculing Corbyn to his colleagues, arms crossed and still shaking his head [Johnson debate - 00:37:10] (UK Parliament, 2019, 20 December). Though, of course, Johnson is hereby reacting to a male MP and not a female MP, his innate negative demeanour is toxic masculine behaviour as it is impolite and hinders the other speakers. And when a female MP - Maria Miller, to be exact

- *was* speaking, he even put his hands in his head, not listening nor trying to act as if he was paying attention. This is incredibly rude and ticks multiple boxes when it comes to toxic masculine discourse [Johnson debate - 1:08:52] (UK Parliament, 2019, 20 December).

#### 4.2.3 Jeremy Corbyn

Another individual showing signs of toxic masculine behaviour is Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition. He was present at both debates and was granted the opportunity to speak as one of the first MPs after the opening statements of Johnson and May. Though his performance of toxic masculine discourse is much more discreet than Johnson's, there is still some notable observations concerning Corbyn's behaviour. Throughout both speeches, Corbyn continuously raises his voice as the fuss in the rest of the House increases. This, however, can be contributed to House of Commons conventions as the fussing is quite standard and, as a speaker, there will be times when you will have to vocally fight to make your point come across. In the Johnson debate, however, Corbyn's performance of toxic masculine discourse is somewhat more prominent. Firstly, like Johnson, there are a couple of instances where Corbyn refuses to give way during his statement. At one point, he is fully ignoring a female MP asking him to give way twice [Johnson debate - 00:42:41] (UK Parliament, 2019, 20 December).

#### 4.2.4 Ian Blackford

A third MP showing signs of toxic masculine performance is Ian Blackford, leader of the Scottish National Party. Like Corbyn, he participated in both debates and was a pretty prominent voice for the Scottish nationalism within the House of Commons. What is interesting about Blackford, is that his speaking manners towards May differed greatly from his speaking manners towards Johnson. During the May debate, he actively urged the PM to resign from her position as PM. Though this could be seen as problematic in itself, the way he spoke was problematic as well, ending his statement with the sentence "will you do it?" [May debate - 00:27:09] (UK Parliament, 2019, 22 May). This small sentence carried a lot of spite, disrespect and condescension. He never spoke in this way during the Johnson debate. The only remarkable thing Blackford did in the Johnson debate was, like Johnson and Corbyn, ignoring female MPs when they asked him to give way to them. Not only did Blackford do this, but he even gave way to a male MP that, as far as the recording and transcript showed, did not necessarily request this like the female MPs that were audibly requesting a turn to speak.

### 4.3 Content

A third aspect of the toxic masculine performance in the House of Commons, was the actual content the speakers produced. There were several instances in which the content of the statements contained information regarding the discourse.

#### 4.3.1 Male MPs

During the May debate, Corbyn used some terminology that was very hostile towards May. Though this might be expected from the leader of the opposition, his speaking manners were very aggressive, continuously raising his voice, not supporting the PM at all:

She did not seek a compromise until after she had missed her own deadline to leave, and by the time she finally did, she had lost the authority to deliver. (...) The PM could not even get the compromise deal she wanted through her own Cabinet. (...) I am sure that nobody here will be fooled by what the PM is offering. (...) Our country needs leadership to bring us together. However, this PM is not the person to do that. (...) She no longer has the authority to offer a compromise and cannot deliver. [May debate - 00:12:15] (Hansard, 2019).

He speaks of her having no authority, her cabinet not supporting her and her being unfit as a leader. Though not necessarily misogynistic, his choice of words is very strong. During the Johnson debate, Corbyn was very critical as well. That criticism was however targeted at the bill, and not at Johnson as a person. Ian Blackford mirrors Corbyn's behaviour in both the Johnson and the May debate. In the May debate, he told May:

This is no way to run a Government. (...) This is a rookie Government attempting to blackmail MPs. (...) and a trade tariff arrangement that the former UK representative to the EU has described as “the definition of insanity”. [May debate - 00:24:25] (Hansard, 2019).

Like Corbyn, Blackford is directly attacking May's leadership skills. Using the phrase ‘the definition of insanity’ is quite strong, as it seems make a suggestion regarding May's mental state which is an even more personal way to describe May unfit as PM. Jacob Rees-Mogg phrases it somewhat differently, but in essence, his statement is in line with Corbyn and Blackford: “In proposing this folderol, is she going through the motions or does she really believe in it?” [May debate - 1:05:15] (Hansard, 2019). This is not a direct personal attack to May, but it does question her political choices as PM. He asks her whether she will go through the motions (implying she does not have faith in her own bill) or whether she does

believe in it (implying she does not heed the suggestions from other MPs). Bob Seely, in his turn, did not personally attack May, but two other female MPs:

We hear two different versions of the future: the one from the [Anna McMorrin], which is effectively denial; and the one from [Emma] Lewell-Buck, which is to accept the result and try to rebuild. One offers a route out for the Labour party, and the other offers a route to an existential crisis and a chance never to hold power again. [Johnson debate – 3:47:48] (MySociety, 2019).

Seely downgrading two proposals by female MPs to 1) “effectively denial” and 2) “a route to an existential crisis” is quite problematic. Of course, this could be motivated by a difference in political view as Seely is a conservative, and McMorrin and Lewell-Buck are both labour party members. However, the way it was said made it such a direct attack on both MPs instead of the labour party as a whole, that this could not be ignored.

#### 4.3.2 Female MPs

Something that was very fascinating to see, is that several female MPs actually commented on the type of discourse during the Johnson debate. They seemed to recognise that some of their male counterparts engaged in a type of toxic masculine discourse that was far from pleasant. Maria Miller was the first female MP to directly comment on this:

This angry politics (...) has to end. It is our responsibility to set the right tone for our political debate in this country. I am afraid that, so far in this debate, that tone has not been struck by all Members. We have an opportunity to introduce a kinder politics in our country, which will help to reduce the amount of abuse that I know so many Members have had to endure over recent years. [Johnson debate - 1:07:40] (MySociety, 2019).

Firstly, it is interesting to see that statements like these were not made during the May debate. Not one MP, either male or female, felt the urge to directly comment on the discourse during the May debate. An explanation for this is that the environment that was created during the May debate was less hostile and more comfortable for all politicians than the environment during the Johnson debate. Miller mentions ‘angry politics’, which is a direct recognition of toxic masculine discourse as aggression is one of the established characteristics. She also directly mentions ‘the amount of abuse’ directed towards MPs, which is proof of the presence of verbal harassment in the House, even though it was established earlier that verbal harassment is against the House of Commons rules. Though she does not specifically say who were subject to the abuse, the presence of verbal harassment is evidence for toxic

masculine discourse in the House. Wera Hobhouse also comments on the discourse in the House, though less elaborate than Miller did: “The relentless rhetoric and the hostile environment created around EU free movement has wounded EU citizens to the core” [Johnson debate - 2:10:06] (MySociety, 2019). Whilst Miller found the current discourse was hurtful to some MPs, Hobhouse goes one step further and suggests it is hurtful to the whole population of the EU. She also claims the current (conservative male dominated) government is perceived as “a mean and self-centred political class” (MySociety, 2019). Emma Lewell-Buck (labour) is on the same page as Hobhouse and Miller, saying:

This has been an awful, toxic period in our politics. I have despaired at how this place has descended so many times into the most divisive, base, angry, gallery-pleasing politics. It might make for good headlines, but it does not make for a serious, functioning Parliament that people can have any respect for or any faith in [Johnson debate - 3:05:01] (MySociety, 2019).

Her explicitly using the word toxic is remarkable. Whereas Miller and Hobhouse comment on how the current political rhetoric might be hurtful, Lewell-Buck is more focused on the fact that the House is not being taken seriously and are losing the people’s trust. This is a side effect of toxic masculine discourse that has some serious repercussions for how the British people view their representatives. Lastly, Alison McGovern (labour) states: “I think we need to step back from some of the language in this debate” [Johnson debate - 3:13:14] (MySociety, 2019). Despite her statement not being as extensive or strong as the ones from some of the aforementioned female MPs, McGovern is still yet another female MP who thinks the discourse in the House needs to change.

#### 4.3.3 Discourse and militarism

Another content-related difference between the May debate and the Johnson debate was the presence of language that can be associated with militarism. Both Achilleos-Sarll & Martil (2019) and Higgins (2020) had found that the language used in Brexit discourse could be associated with militarism and the combination between militarism and performative masculinity. Several examples of this were found in the Johnson debate, but none in the May debate. Bill Cash, for example, compares the historical significance of Brexit with WW2: “In May 1940, we decided that we would not be governed by any other country. We defeated Hitler and made it clear that we would be a self-governing nation” [Johnson debate - 2:18:12] (MySociety, 2019). Later on, he does this again by saying democracy and trust is “something so precious that people fought and died for it” [Johnson debate - 2:23:25] (MySociety, 2019).

Simon Hoare (conservative) referred to the elections on 12 December 2019 as “a civil war, but without the blood” [Johnson debate - 2:44:15] (MySociety, 2019), Mark Francois (conservative) referred to the Brexit process as “the war in this place over Europe” [Johnson debate - 2:59:35] (MySociety, 2019) and Richard Drax (conservative) even said he had adopted “a battle cry: ‘we want our country back’” [Johnson debate - 3:20:45] (MySociety, 2019). These are all examples of language that can be associated with military life. It is worth noting that only conservative male MPs used this type of discourse, and only during the Johnson debate.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The research question that was investigated in this thesis was as follows: to what extent is there a difference in the performance of toxic masculinity in the House of Commons debates concerning Brexit with either Theresa May or Boris Johnson as PM? The preliminary hypothesis was that, even if the toxic nature of the House of Commons is taken into account, there will be a more prominent performance of toxic masculinity in the debate with Johnson as PM than with May as PM. The general data provided a couple of interesting findings. For example, it was curious to find out that, even though Johnson's parliament contained more female MPs, the number of female speakers in his debate was less than in May's debate. Also, the large difference in percentages of male conservative MPs in table 4b did catch the eye. These results on their own, nevertheless, are not necessarily of significance.

The discourse analysis provided some more in-depth results. It was found that, vocabulary-wise, female MPs were generally more polite and nicer to both male and female MPs than male MPs were. Male MPs did use toxic vocabulary in the May debate, but (with example to one remark targeted towards Hobhouse) not in the Johnson debate. This toxic vocabulary was always directed at May. Regarding non-verbal communication, it was found that a number of male individuals (including Boris Johnson himself) showed toxic masculine performance, mostly during the Johnson debate. Apparently, the atmosphere during the Johnson debate allowed for more toxic masculine performance than the May debate did. Content-wise, the findings were the most striking. Several statements proved the findings by Achilleos-Sarll & Martil (2019) and Higgins (2020) regarding the connection between military references and performative masculinity. Furthermore, there was evidence of several direct personal attacks on female MPs whereas male MPs were usually not personally attacked, but their work was. The extent of strong language-use against female MPs was striking. The thing that was most striking, however, was the number of female MPs that actually commented on the toxicity of the discourse during the Johnson debate in the House. From these findings, it can be concluded that the atmosphere during the Johnson debate allowed for more toxic masculine discourse than the atmosphere during the May debate. This can be attributed to Johnson himself, as he displayed some of the most toxic behaviour. As PM, he has an exemplary role to all other MPs, so it is logical that other male MPs copy his behaviour (or at least feel that toxic behaviour is more permitted). This confirms the hypothesis.

There are numerous options when it comes to further research. Of course, looking at two debates is merely scratching the surface of the issue. There is an enormous amount of debates concerning the Brexit process, some of which are more polarizing than others. Expanding the research and looking at more data to investigate whether the findings of the current study will be confirmed could be the first step. A second step could be to look at debates regarding other issues. It would be interesting to see whether similar findings can be found when looking at debates concerning e.g. the corona crisis, or climate change. Another option would be to compare two male PMs from different parties, so e.g. comparing Boris Johnson to Gordon Brown or Tony Blair. This could be done to see whether party affiliation has an effect on the extent to which toxic masculinity is performed. In short, there are several different ways to go from here.

It has been mentioned earlier that popular media have been commenting on the toxic masculinity in the Brexit process, but that there was a lack of academic evidence to support this. This research might be the beginning of a collection of academic evidence of toxic masculinity in the House of Commons debates. If enough academic research regarding this topic is conducted, it might be a possibility to look at ways to make the discourse in the House of Commons more gender neutral or female friendly. This will make the UK political climate less appalling and more appealing to women, which might result in an increase in female MPs and a larger diversity within the House of Commons.

Total word count: 9355

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Appendices**Appendix 1**

Speakers during Statement on Leaving the European Union (the May debate). Based on UK Parliament (2019, 22 May) and Hansard (2019).

Time stamp	Name speaker	Gender speaker	Party affiliation
00:00	Theresa May	F	Conservative
11:15	Jeremy Corbyn	M	Labour
19:52	Theresa May	F	Conservative
23:10	Iain Duncan Smith	M	Conservative
24:05	Ian Blackford	M	SNP
28:25	John Redwood	M	Conservative
29:13	Hilary Benn	M	Labour
31:04	Bill Cash	M	Conservative
31:58	Yvette Cooper	F	Labour
33:54	Nicky Morgan	F	Conservative
35:35	Nigel Dodds	M	DUP
37:35	Owen Paterson	M	Conservative
38:20	Liz Kendall	F	Labour
39:33	Alistair Bird	M	Conservative
41:08	Tim Farron	M	Liberal Democrats
42:30	Richard Drax	M	Conservative
44:35	George Howarth	M	Labour
45:35	David Jones	M	Conservative
46:23	Liz Saville Roberts	F	Plaid Cymru
47:24	Vicky Ford	F	Conservative
48:46	Chuka Umunna	M	Liberal Democrats
49:35	Richard Graham	M	Conservative

51:11	Joanna Cherry	F	SNP
53:16	Robert Neill	M	Conservative
55:28	Caroline Flint	F	Labour
57:56	Jeremy Lefroy	M	Conservative
58:16	Pat McFadden	M	Labour
59:24	Peter Bottomley	M	Conservative
1:00:32	Helen Goodman	F	Labour
1:00:37	Edward Leigh	M	Conservative
1:03:40	Barry Sheerman	M	Labour
1:05:04	Jacob Rees-Mogg	M	Conservative
1:07:02	Peter Kyle	M	Labour
1:08:25	Desmond Swayne	M	Conservative
1:09:51	Stephen Kinnock	M	Labour
1:11:03	Thangam Debbonaire	F	Labour
1:11:44	Mike Gapes	M	Labour
1:12:51	Gavin Newlands	M	SNP
1:13:35	Alberto Costa	M	Conservative
1:14:53	Phil Wilson	M	Labour
1:16:10	Rupa Hug	F	Labour
1:17:28	Peter Grant	M	SNP
1:18:32	Janet Daby	F	Labour
1:19:07	Tom Brake	M	Liberal Democrats
1:20:50	David Linden	M	SNP
1:21:42	Geraint Davies	M	Labour
1:22:44	Sarah Wollaston	F	Liberal Democrats
1:24:10	Rachael Maskell	F	Labour
1:25:20	Anna McMorrin	F	Labour
1:26:42	Chris Stephen	M	SNP

1:27:31	Alex Sobel	M	Labour
1:28:48	Neill Gray	M	SNP
1:29:55	Jim Shannon	M	DUP

## Appendix 2

Speakers during EU Withdrawal Bill (the Johnson debate). Based on UK Parliament (2019, 20 December) and My Society (2019).

Time stamp	Name speaker	Gender speaker	Party affiliation
15:28	Boris Johnson	M	Conservative
17:02	Jonathan Edwards	M	Independent
17:30	Boris Johnson	M	Conservative
20:40	Joanna Cherry	F	SNP
21:14	Boris Johnson	M	Conservative
22:05	Owen Paterson	M	Conservative
23:45	Lisa Nandy	F	Labour
24:25	Boris Johnson	M	Conservative
26:29	Gavin Robinson	M	DUP
27:30	Boris Johnson	M	Conservative
31:02	Jeremy Corbyn	M	Labour
34:47	David Evennett	M	Conservative
35:03	Jeremy Corbyn	M	Labour
36:23	Mark Francois	M	Conservative
37:16	Rupa Hug	F	Labour
37:43	Jeremy Corbyn	M	Labour
43:32	Liam Fox	M	Conservative
45:30	John Baron	M	Conservative
45:54	Liam Fox	M	Conservative
48:23	Iain Duncan Smith	M	Conservative
48:58	Liam Fox	M	Conservative
50:03	Ian Blackford	M	SNP
54:03	Shailesh Vara	M	Conservative

54:40	Ian Blackford	M	SNP
59:38	Geraint Davies	M	Labour
1:00:08	Ian Blackford	M	SNP
1:04:10	Maria Miller	F	Conservative
1:06:41	Mike Amesbury	M	Labour
1:06:55	Maria Miller	F	Conservative
1:09:22	Hilary Benn	M	Labour
1:12:34	Tim Loughton	M	Conservative
1:13:07	Hilary Benn	M	Labour
1:13:57	Stephen Timms	M	Labour
1:14:17	Hilary Benn	M	Labour
1:17:14	Matt Western	M	Labour
1:17:36	Hilary Benn	M	Labour
1:18:55	Damian Green	M	Conservative
1:20:40	Caroline Lucas	F	Green
1:21:12	Damian Green	M	Conservative
1:22:26	Alison McGovern	F	Labour
1:22:39	Damian Green	M	Conservative
1:23:41	Jeffrey Donaldson	M	DUP
1:25:15	Jim Shannon	M	DUP
1:25:48	Jeffrey Donaldson	M	DUP
1:30:29	Suella Braverman	F	Conservative
1:36:03	Claire Hanna	F	SDLP
1:42:33	Owen Paterson	M	Conservative
1:50:03	Matthew Pennycook	M	Labour
1:54:49	Rachel Maclean	F	Conservative
1:59:22	Catherine McKinnell	F	Labour
2:04:42	Stephen Crabb	M	Conservative

2:07:47	Colum Eastwood	M	SDLP
2:08:16	Stephen Crabb	M	Conservative
2:10:06	Wera Hobhouse	F	Liberal Democrats
2:15:18	Bill Cash	M	Conservative
2:18:25	Daniel Kawczynski	M	Conservative
2:18:58	Bill Cash	M	Conservative
2:23:43	Stephen Farry	M	APNI
2:31:04	Nigel Evans	M	Conservative
2:36:11	Stephen Timms	M	Labour
2:40:02	Ian Paisley Jr	M	DUP
2:40:26	Stephen Timms	M	Labour
2:42:16	Simon Hoare	M	Conservative
2:46:30	Stewart McDonald	M	SNP
2:46:43	Simon Hoare	M	Conservative
2:50:25	Alyn Smith	M	SNP
2:55:30	Mark Francois	M	Conservative
2:57:08	Henry Smith	M	Conservative
2:57:37	Mark Francois	M	Conservative
3:01:51	Emma Lewell-Buck	F	Labour
3:05:49	John Hayes	M	Conservative
3:12:17	Alison McGovern	F	Labour
3:18:55	Richard Drax	M	Conservative
3:24:03	Helen Hayes	F	Labour
3:27:38	Bob Seely	M	Conservative
3:27:54	Helen Hayes	F	Labour
3:29:14	Vicky Ford	F	Conservative
3:33:25	Daniel Zeichner	M	Labour

3:36:50	Robert Courts	M	Conservative
3:41:39	Anna McMorrin	F	Labour
3:46:27	Bob Seely	M	Conservative
3:50:11	Ruth Cadbury	F	Labour
3:54:07	Mike Wood	M	Conservative
3:58:13	Peter Grant	M	SNP
4:02:16	Steve Double	M	Conservative