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He Said, She Said: the Impact of Language in Advertising on the Development of a Feminist Identity

Alicia Fletcher

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He Said, She Said: the Impact of Language in Advertising on the Development of a Feminist Identity

By Alicia C. Fletcher

Advisor: Johanna Church

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Abstract

Little kids are often told they can be anything they want to be. Firefighter, princess, football player, and dragon are among the more popular answers. One of the less popular answers is “Feminist.” Very rarely, if ever, do young children declare that when they grow up, they want to be Feminists. So, how did so many people grow up to be Feminists? At what point do people realize that they can be both firefighter and Feminist, orthodontist and Feminist, or seamstress and Feminist? Though there is no set timeline, it begins when people start to develop identities and fundamental beliefs that exist in alignment with the core ideals of the Feminist sociopolitical movement. This often happens subconsciously. The messages sent to a person that lead them to develop a Feminist or anti-Feminist identity are often subliminal and typically come in the form of popular culture that caters to those who assume gender is binary. In this project, the language and subliminal messages used in print and video advertisements for men and women’s soap, men and women’s shaving razors, tampons, and condoms is analyzed in terms of how it promotes or challenges fundamental Feminist ideals and how it impacts the development, or lack thereof, of a Feminist identity.

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As Leslie Knope, civil servant and passionate Feminist of NBC's "Parks and Recreation," once said: "No one achieves anything alone." I certainly did not achieve the completion of this thesis alone.

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Introduction

Every person has an identity. Whether an identity is formed through gender expression, political affiliation, nationality or ethnicity, or age, among countless other contributors, identities are part of every living being. However, living in a developed society will inevitably lead to interaction with other people who have the power to influence the way a person may define their identity. This interaction with others will introduce people to others who may have developed differing identities throughout their childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Beyond an individual, there are collective identities of larger social groups with which a person may align their own, independent identities.

How do people determine exactly how to define their identities? How numerous are the external forces at work? Are people truly independent, or do these external forces truly have the power to reinforce or challenge the entire belief system upon which groups of people have built their identities? For purposes of this project, the “external forces” discussed will refer to advertising media for hygiene and sexual health products for both men and women. The “groups of people” and “collective identities” will refer to people who actively identify as Feminists and/or align their identities with Feminist ideals, and those who do not.

The first chapter discusses the psychological and sociological development of identity. Primarily, Erik Erikson’s psychosocial stages are used to explain the malleability of a person’s identity at any given point in their development. Furthermore, the long-term impact of positive and negative forces on a young child are outlined in order to provide the reader with a foundation for understanding the impact of Feminist media and anti-Feminist media on identity development in chapter three.

Second is a history of Feminist theory. In the second chapter, a chronological history of the development of modern Feminist theory is given in order for the reader to understand the magnitude and duration of the Feminist movement. This chapter begins with a discussion of how long Feminism has been present in society. Retellings of the story of Eve and Satan in the Garden of Eden imply that Feminism was present in the book of Genesis, yet overshadowed and ignored by the prevailing patriarchal ideals of the first few centuries. Beyond that, modern Feminist theory can be traced back to the 17th and 18th centuries, both through works written by women that advocate for the advancement of womankind, and works written by men, which advocate for the opposite. This chapter details how, through the efforts of these women, the Suffragettes of the 1800s and 1900s, the “second wave” Feminists of the World War II era into the Vietnam War era, and those who began the “third wave” of Feminist theory in the 1990s, modern-day Feminists continue to work to achieve the fundamental goals of the Movement.

But, when do people get to begin working to achieve political and social equality for the marginalized? Do they have to join a club and pay dues? Are there patches and annual cookie sales? How do people become “Feminists”? The third chapter answers these questions. To call oneself a Feminist is to *identify* in part with the fundamental goals of the movement. People are not born Feminists nor are they born misogynists or misandrists. “Feminist” is a sociopolitical identity label that is developed based on whether or not a person is impacted positively or negatively by external forces that boast a Feminist or anti-Feminist message. As stated previously, the “external forces” analyzed for the purposes of this project are advertisements for personal hygiene and sexual / reproductive health products published over the last few decades that either reinforce or challenge traditional, patriarchal gender roles. These products were

chosen given that there is a clear divide between advertisements for these products developed for cisgendered men and advertisements made for cisgendered women. The more frequently a person is exposed to forms of media with different sociopolitical agendas, the more their identity begins to adapt to conform to the ideals and lifestyles, which are depicted as being superior.

Chapter One: Formation of Identity

“...In the social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity.” -Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*

Identities are built upon a foundation of language. Language is used to define a person's gender, sexuality, personality, political leanings, as well as other factors of that person's life. Language is often the most powerful tool a person can use when trying to persuade or influence others, for when used by a person who has a high political or social standing, it has the ability to create feelings of animosity and resentment, and it can cause destruction among targeted groups of people. Research has shown that derogatory and deprecatory language have long-lasting negative effects on those being targeted ranging from feelings such as mild embarrassment or humiliation to severe depression and feelings of inadequacy. In spite of all the negativity, there are ways to use language in social and political media to inspire and entertain others, and even bring about social revolution. Upon analyzing the psychological foundation of language on our development of identity, one can analyze the effects that pro-Feminist and anti-Feminist media have on the development of Feminist identities in young adult women.

From the time that people are born, they begin absorbing information about the world around them. As people grow, so does their sense of communication. From wailing and crying being an infant's sole source of communication, so develops the ability to learn simple words, ask questions, give answers, and make decisions that are influenced by information received. People absorb information about the kind of people that they are encouraged to become and are expected to become by listening to the communication happening around them. The shared social experiences of youth teach people how to make decisions, handle conflict, interact with others, etc. as they grow. Without being cognizant of them, these factors are used to build an

identity. Before discussing in depth how language impacts identity, one must first discuss the foundations of an identity. What, exactly, is an identity? How is it formed? Who has a say in how it is formed? Why do people make the choices that they do when it comes to choosing to define, or to not define, how they view themselves in this world?

Bonny Norton, a distinguished professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education, at the University of British Columbia, defines the term “identity” as: “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Darvin). This is a very broad definition and allows for the interpretation of the characteristics that develop identity openly. Though it can be addressed by asking one question, “who are you?,” the myriad possibilities that could be used in response make it difficult to determine what identity can mean to an individual or specific group of individuals. Dr. Shahram Heshmat, a writer for *Psychology Today*, states that identity is less a definition of a person in their entirety, rather a summary of their core beliefs and values, and, when the person in question reaches adulthood, their occupation. The example that Heshmat uses is that of a college professor who values teaching students and helping others, and can therefore be identified as someone who is altruistic and intelligent. Dr. Heshmat also states that people rarely ever choose their identities deliberately, rather they “internalize the values of their parents or their dominant cultures.” In other words, people do not knowingly make decisions about the kind of person they want to be. The decisions made that guide development are made subconsciously.

Over time, the conscious means by which a person forms their identity have evolved drastically, though the basic subconscious lessons remain the same. Where lives were once defined by location, socioeconomic status, gender, and race, societal boundaries have begun to

expand and people are pursuing careers and lifestyles to build identities that once resulted in shame and isolation. Many psychologists have studied the growth and development of people in society from childhood to adulthood in order to understand how people become multidimensional individuals, but also to understand how people grow to become a part of a community simultaneously.

Erik Erikson was a 20th century psychologist whose understanding of identity was significantly influenced by Freud. Erikson's theories differed from Freud's in that Erikson believed identity continued to develop throughout all of one's life, not just throughout the duration of childhood. Erikson conceptualized this development as a combination of "individual" and "context." While an individual pursued their interests, talents, and desires, they were drawn to different environments, or as Erikson called them, contexts, that "provided recognition" and were "critical to ... further development" of identity (Kroger). In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology, Jane Kroger states that Erikson believed that a person needed to complete a series of eight psychosocial tasks throughout their life in order to have developed a comprehensive identity. According to Richard Evans, in *Dialogue with Erik Erikson*, Erikson himself confirms that rudimentary characteristics emerge at the beginning of each stage and continue to develop throughout a person's lifespan. Erikson believed that once each task was completed, the resolution set the foundation for the following tasks. Furthermore, he argued that with the completion of each stage, the person in question would grow into a new version of themselves with increased cognitive abilities and the ability to interact and absorb information from a greater range of people and interests (Evans 26). At the end of all eight tasks, in ideal circumstances, a person will have achieved a healthy, fully developed sense of self. Before delving further into the details of each stage, it is important to note that the success of each stage is often framed by

others as being dependent on the presence of the positive attribute and the absence of the negative. However, Erikson believed that developing a certain ratio of both the positive and negative virtues, where the ratio was in favor of the positive, was crucial to development (Evans 15). Only after achieving a fully developed sense of self can an individual use the data, such as language, media, and political propaganda, around them to decide what values they want to support, align themselves with, and incorporate into their identities.

Erikson's first stage of psychosocial development is focused on the concept of Trust vs. Mistrust (Jenkins, et al.). Healthy resolution of this stage manifests itself as the ability to trust and have faith in oneself and those present in a person's environment; given that the first stage takes place during approximately the first two years of life, according to Saul McLeod, a psychology researcher at the University of Manchester, it can be assumed that the individuals present in an infant's environment during the development of this stage are parents, siblings, grandparents, and other caretakers (McLeod). Healthy completion of this stage is also vital to proper development of the following stages. As Stephanie Scheck, author of *The Stages of Development According to Erik H. Erikson*, states "the basic trust in oneself and others forms the basis for any later development and consequently ... is something that will always remain and resonate subliminally" (Scheck). Furthermore, Erikson himself stated that "because of [man's] lifelong struggles between trust and mistrust in changing states and conditions, it has to be developed firmly, and then be confirmed and reaffirmed throughout life" (Evans, 18). Should this stage be completed with a higher ratio of mistrust in relation to trust, the individual in question will grow to view the world as dangerous, stressful, and unpredictable (Jenkins, et al.).

The second stage, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, is impacted by both psychological and physiological external factors. The physiological factors include "the growing need to

absorb, appropriate, and observe” life whereas the primary psychological factor is the growing realization of one’s self-awareness (Scheck). This stage occurs from the ages of two to three years old, which is often when children are taught basic lessons in safety, such as staying with a parent (a trustworthy figure) and not running away or speaking to strangers (untrustworthy figures). Alain Morin, using research conducted by Shelley Duval and R.A. Wicklund, defines self-awareness as “the most fundamental self-perceptual process of directing attention inward toward the self,” in the publication *A Theory of Objective Self Awareness*. Completion of the second stage is very important to further development because, should this stage be completed successfully, the growth and lessons learned will allow individuals to not only recognize that which can or cannot be trusted, but they will also have learned, at the most basic level, how to perceive the way in which the trustworthy or untrustworthy entity will impact their safety.

Erikson’s third stage is one that encompasses the strengthening of one’s self esteem and development of courage in order to accomplish certain goals. This stage is known as Initiative vs. Guilt, and utilizes the lessons in autonomy from the previous stage in order to teach an individual how to capitalize on their sense of autonomy and have the courage to achieve a strong sense of purpose. Alternatively, those who are not able to adequately complete this stage will “experience guilt related to powerful action” (Jenkins, et al.). As they progress, they will find themselves needing to overcome more adversity than their peers, or even find themselves unable to achieve their full purpose in life. The third stage takes place over the course of ages three to five, and can thus be exemplified by the way children are taught to take initiative in openly communicating thoughts, feelings, and issues with those around them. This ability to take initiative is developed largely when children have the chance to play with other children, as this

is where they are able to learn interpersonal skills as well as begin to fall into the categories of “leader” and “follower” (McLeod).

Following the third stage, individuals experience the fourth stage, which is known as Industry vs. Inferiority (Jenkins, et al.) or the Latency stage (Evans 25), with the term “industry” referring to industriousness. The primary goal of this stage is for an individual to gain competency and is said to last from the ages of five to twelve, which is considerably longer than the standard one to two years that all preceding stages have lasted. During this stage, the child will ideally develop a desire to learn, to improve their abilities -- intellectual and otherwise -- and to begin creating things that make them feel proud of themselves. Development of the aforementioned traits is fueled by a desire to win the approval and acceptance of those present in their environment (McLeod). Positive reinforcement of accomplishments, such as a teacher praising a student who has completed a mathematics problem correctly, will strengthen that child’s feeling of competency. Those who do not receive this kind of positive reinforcement do not adequately complete this stage often consider themselves to be inferior to their peers, and feel “despair” (Jenkins, et al.) towards their lesser intelligence and abilities as a result of the perceived lack of acceptance.

Erikson’s fifth psychosocial task is known as Identity Formation vs. Role Confusion. This is the most important stage in the development of one’s identity, given that it’s where adolescents begin to think of their role in life in regards to consideration of the future and their own values as opposed to the present way that others perceive them based on their development of trust, autonomy, competency, etc. Tija Rageliene, a researcher at Aarhus University, explains that Erikson believed the fifth stage was when adolescents are able to “construct their own unique sense of identity, and find the social environment where they can belong to and create

meaningful relationships with other people” in “Links of Adolescents Identity Development and Relationship with Peers: A Systematic Literature Review.” (Rageliene). In addition, Erikson believed that “you could speak of a fully mature ego only after adolescence” and that “identity formation is really a restructuring of all previous identifications in the light of an anticipated future.” (Evans 31, 36).

The outcomes of the four previous stages lay the foundation for how successfully the fifth stage is developed. When a child is able to adequately determine whom to trust, how external factors will impact them, and how to speak their minds without guilt, and also to receive positive reinforcement for work done with a sense of purpose, they will naturally begin to develop a more specific sense of identity that better represents who they aspire to be as opposed to who their influencers have encouraged them to be as they navigate the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Providing a child with the avenues to successfully complete these stages and foster a strong sense of purpose “promises positive development throughout adolescence and even across a whole life span” (Merrick, et al.), allowing them to take an active role in deciding how their environment impacts their growth and their decision making.

Now that it is known that within the various stages of development, a child’s environment can have a very strong impact on a child’s success or failure, it must be discovered what factor causes the difference in outcomes. Why do some children succeed over others, and how do these environmental factors continue to affect children as they become teenagers and adults?

Simply put, a child’s success in development depends on the experiences had in youth. Experiences that children have must “undergo cognitive and affective processing,” which influences people's perception of their environment as well as their perceptions of themselves

(Rutter). As evidenced by the subheadings of chapter seven in *Positive Youth Development: Theory, Research and Application* (Merrick, et al.), the development of positive identity results in and is cultivated by experiencing promotion of self-esteem, fostering exploration and commitment, and reducing self-discrepancies. It is stated in this same publication that “affective and abundant family communication ... and a healthy parental role model” are what produced healthy behavioral patterns in children and teenagers. In chapter seven, particularly in the *Promoting Self-Esteem* subchapter, the authors discuss how caretakers can ensure the maturation of healthy, positive identity through ensuring a child experiences “positive self-evaluation” and the most important experience: “increase positive self-talk.” The reason why the method of increasing positive self-talk is the most important is because it comes the closest to the ideology that the publication implies but does not explicitly state: the way to teach positive self-evaluation, reduce self-discrepancies, increase positive self-talk, and as a result, ensure the growth of a fully realized, healthy identity is through language. The positive language used in giving compliments and in positive reinforcement allow a chance to “enhance positive youth development” (Merrick, Joav, et al.).

Comparatively, directing negative, derogatory language at someone causes an adverse reaction of similar strength to the utilization of positive language. Michael Rutter, in *British Journal of Psychiatry*, discovers that children in “broken homes” were at a higher risk of depressive disorders in adult life, not due to “family break-up” but rather due to living in an environment with “family discord and conflict,” which could include (but is not limited to) arguing, fighting, and even bullying -- all of which share the common thread of negative language used in the form of slurs, insults, and threats.

In correlation with Erikson's theory that identity foundations must be reaffirmed throughout life, Rutter states that "environmental effects have been shown not only for influences in infancy, but also for influences in middle childhood and even in adult life." Should a child be predisposed to an environment with excessive tension, unrest, and fear, it can be assumed that the ratios of each virtue present in the first stages of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development will be developed in favor of the negative attribute. The child in question will become an adolescent who is more familiar with feelings of mistrust, guilt, shame, and doubt than with feelings of trust, competency, and industriousness. Erikson believed trust became "the capacity for faith," and that an adolescent who has a perception of the world where mistrust reigns supreme will "paradoxically, express his need for faith in loud and cynical mistrust," thus harming the chance of forming relationships with others and of finding like-minded people, organizations, and ideas to have *faith in*" (Erikson 106, 128-129).

Erikson's theories of identity development are crucial to understanding the identity of a Feminist identity. When one understands how a person's identity is formed, they can understand how it is impacted by the language present in the world around them. However, understanding what Feminist language is also plays a crucial role in understanding how a Feminist identity is developed. The next chapter provides a brief history of Feminist theory and how it has evolved into the strong political force it is today. Only after knowing what language and vernacular qualifies as Feminist or anti-Feminist can we understand how it impacts whether or not a person aligns their identity with Feminism.

Chapter Two: A History of Feminist Theory

It can be argued that Feminism has existed since the beginning of humanity, in Biblical terms. The story of Adam and Eve is often regarded as a cautionary tale directed at those who would deign to defy their elders or superiors. Traditionally though, it carries a very misogynistic overtone: that all of the negativity, sorrow, and despair in the world exists because of a woman's weakness in the face of temptation. However, when examined through the lens of free will, it can be argued that Eve was exercising her right to choose her own life path, undeterred by the influence of any man. Heather Randall of Brigham Young University argues that Eve was actually the first Feminist (in variations of this story where Lilith is not present), laying the groundwork for all the women to come who are forced to live under the calloused, heavy thumb of manhood (Randall).

Inspiring as Eve may be, though, it is hard to give her a large amount of credit for being a creator of Feminism, given that there is no evidence that she ever truly existed, nor that she did much beyond practice an act of defiance in the face of her superior. Modern Feminism can be traced back to the efforts of women across the world, but primarily in America and France, during the late eighteenth century. This is known as the Enlightenment Period of Feminism (Donovan 1). Women began openly questioning and critiquing societal values that had long determined their station, relegating them to positions that would favor the men around them. The questioning was designed to enlighten those around them and show that there was a world available to women beyond sightliness, silence, and servitude.

Josephine Donovan, author of *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism*, credits the beginning of post-Revolutionary American Feminism to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Written in 1792 as a response to Olympe

de Gouges's *Droits de la Femme* (Rights of Women), Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* is called "the first major work of Feminist theory in history" (Donovan 9). Despite being regarded as the work that "was to dominate subsequent Feminist thought," prior to *Vindication*, there had been other famous efforts made by women shortly before. Notably, de Gouges's *Droits*, which was written a mere four months prior to Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*. Another famous instance of early Feminist influence is Abigail Adams during the American Revolutionary War telling her husband, John Adams, that when the time came to draft new laws for the new independent nation of America, that he should "remember the ladies and be more generous ... to them than your ancestors" ("Abigail Adams"). It should come as no surprise that John Adams did, indeed, forget the ladies.

Ultimately, the reason why John Adams and every other person involved in the drafting of the Declaration of Independence "forgot" the ladies of America extends back in history to philosopher John Locke. In 1690, Locke published his *Second Treatise of Government*, in which he stated that in order to understand political power, "[people] must consider what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions" (Locke). Locke's wording in his *Second Treatise*, and in this quote specifically, was taken all too literally, because instead of interpreting "all men" as all members of mankind, including women, it was interpreted to mean males and only males. This led to the mindset among men, who were in sole control of all aspects of life such as commerce, government, healthcare, property, finances, etc. that women were not in the natural state of perfect freedom, and were therefore not entitled to the benefits of such a state.

Furthermore, the arrogance that developed among men from believing they were the only ones afforded the pleasures of John Locke's inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of

happiness (Tuckness) led them to believe in the chauvinistic idea that “rational beings ... have the right to impose their ‘reason’ on all who lack it – women, non-human creatures, and the earth itself” (Donovan 3). This is the primary basis for female oppression: given that men are supposedly the only rational beings existing in a state of perfect freedom, women are therefore ineligible for perfectly free lives but also are too irrational for independent lives left uncontrolled by men.

The belief that women were secondary to men did not exist just in the egotistical hubris of the male population during the 17th and 18th centuries. The limitations placed on women were made official by showing up in legal documents and laws, doing all that could be done to keep women in a place of subjugation to men. Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, published between 1765 and 1765, declares unequivocally that women have absolutely no claim to the same rights as men. Specifically, he says “By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything” (Blackstone). Ironically, the title of Book the First of Blackstone’s *Commentaries* (in which this passage can be found) is “The Rights of Persons,” which is to say that since women were given close to none of the same rights as men during this time, they were hardly considered.

Women were seen as less than people because men chose to see them as property, something from which they could benefit. Donovan points out that John Locke also emphasized the importance of private property as an important piece in the journey of freedom and autonomy. Simply put, the more a person owned, the more importance they had. So, naturally, if a person’s value was measured in tangible objects, it only made sense for a man to claim a wife,

all of her belongings, and all of her inheritance to increase the number of things he owned. As indicated in Blackstone's Commentaries, women at that time had no property rights nor did they have any claim to their inheritance. As a result, upon marriage, anything a woman owned as well as her own existence fell under the control of her husband.

Being a member of an oppressed community is not something that will foster feelings of high self-esteem and inner satisfaction with oneself. As is evidenced by the works produced by many women of this time calling for reform, the result was that women often felt dissatisfaction and unrest. To exist in a world where a woman's biggest achievement is finding a man to provide for the remainder of her days led to women being cornered into leading lives that could be described as inconsequential at best. Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* describes how women left uneducated must center their lives around appearance and beauty. She laments "they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch" (Wollstonecraft, 83), and that, despite being given enough food and comfort, they must sacrifice their "health, liberty, and virtue ... in exchange" (Wollstonecraft 83). According to Donovan, when *Vindication* was written, "women must cultivate their beauty and 'their senses' at the expense of their minds..." (Donovan, 8). Despite being written over three hundred years ago, the idea of a woman's worth being determined by her beauty is an ideology that still persists today.

Wollstonecraft believed that for a woman to rise above the condition that used her appearance to determine her worth, she must be properly educated. She argued that existing solely as an object pleasing to the eye prevented them from obtaining a proper education and critical thinking skills, "the most important single item on the Feminist agenda" (Donovan 9). Another prominent critic of patriarchal culture limiting a woman's education during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is Sarah Grimké. Grimké was an American Feminist

author who wrote multiple letters, later compiled and known as *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*. Though she criticized the educational limitations and denial of women to achieve their full intellectual purpose, similar to Wollstonecraft, she looked at the limitations through a religious lens, claiming that religious subjugation kept women in “mental bondage” (Donovan 12). In her second letter, entitled “Woman Subject Only to God,” she writes that woman was never “placed under the dominion of her fellow man,” nor was man ever granted supremacy (Grimké 3-4).

The work of Wollstonecraft, Grimké, de Gouges, and the countless other women who challenged the dehumanizing standard placed upon women was influential in creating a standard for modern Feminism and building a platform on which future Feminists and activists could speak. By raising questions for which nobody had an answer, they began inspiring women to find more meaning in their lives, to work towards a life of autonomy and intelligence, and to dismantle the misogynistic patriarchy in favor of a world in which women were free to spend their lives acting, looking, believing, and existing in ways that brought them joy.

A mere eleven years after Grimké’s second letter was published, dismantling the argument that man was given divine right over women by God, one of the single most important events in Feminist history took place: the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 (“Seneca Falls Convention.”). This convention was the first convention ever to take place in the United States regarding the discussion of women’s rights. It is widely regarded as the event that launched the suffragette movement, which urged the United States government to grant women the same right to vote as their male counterparts.

There were many great results of the efforts produced by the Convention organizers and attendees (notably, the eleven resolutions on women’s rights, all of which were passed unanimously, except for the ninth resolution giving women the right to vote, which only barely

passed after many impassioned speeches from Convention organizer Elizabeth Cady Stanton and American Abolitionist, Frederick Douglass). The greatest, and most famous, of all these efforts was the drafting of the Declaration of Sentiments.

With wording and phraseology that bears a striking and intentional parallel to the Declaration of Independence, written less than a century prior, the Declaration of Sentiments asserted that women were just as entitled to the freedoms named in the Declaration of Independence as men. Pushing for a strong reform of the democracy in place at the time, the extensive list of “Sentiments” brought all that women were being deprived of to the attention of the American government, still in its infancy at the time, and demanded that they be afforded the rights given to men as citizens of the United States. Often called the “Women’s Declaration of Independence,” this specific document written during the Seneca Falls Convention is often regarded as “the single most important factor in spreading the word about the burgeoning women’s rights movement around the country,” and is what helped to define the values women search for in the continuing fight for equality of rights (“The Declaration of Sentiments”).

After the Seneca Falls Convention was held and the Declaration of Sentiments was signed, multiple organizations formed, primarily focused on gaining women the right to vote. In 1869, Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, a close friend of Stanton and fellow suffragette formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). This association opposed the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States on the basis that it would grant only black men the right to vote in elections, and would not grant the same right to women of any color. In the same year, Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell, two abolitionists, formed the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which supported the Fifteenth amendment. It was their belief that any extension of voting rights was a step in the right direction, and to ask for suffrage for women as

well would be to ask for too much, jeopardizing the likelihood of the amendment's ratification ("19th Amendment"; "AWSA Memorial"; Drexler).

The Fifteenth Amendment was ratified a year later, in February of 1870 (though was not practiced given that many states continued to use other means of disenfranchisement to prevent black Americans from voting). Eleven years later, the NWSA and the AWSA joined forces to continue the efforts for earning voting rights for women, and adopted the name, the National American Woman Suffrage Association ("19th Amendment"). Women nationwide then earned the right to vote with the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, seventy-two years after the Seneca Falls Convention, where the resolution for women's suffrage was nearly denied.

Organizations formed with the purpose of earning equal rights for women continued to urge both federal and state legislatures to reform government systems and eradicate the legal barriers that barred women from achieving their full purpose. But the fights were, overall, much more subdued and occurred on a smaller scale. This is not to say that the Feminist movement went radio silent after the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified and then re-emerged in the sixties. Instead, women focused more on putting earlier theory into practice as opposed to developing theory further (Donovan 59).

One of the most prominent cultural shifts seen between the 1920's and 1960's, which is when the Second Wave of Feminism is said to have begun, was the redefining of traditional familial structures and gender roles and a greater emphasis on the idea of self-reliance, a concept seen in earlier works by Wollstonecraft, Grimké, and Stanton. Simply put, self-reliance as seen through a Feminist lens supports the idea that women should have the ability to take charge of their own lives and to have the freedom to deviate from the predestined path all women were placed upon (Chavez).

Despite the modern fight for equality among the sexes (referring to the biological sexes of male and female, not the binary cisgender identities of female woman and male man) lasting nearly two centuries by the time the second wave of Feminism began, there was still a very significant system of discrimination against women in favor of men in place in society. Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her first major work, *Women and Economics*, published in 1898, long before the Second Wave of Feminism, illustrated the notion that marriage is a form of systematic prostitution into which women are placed. Gilman argues that the ideology of Social Darwinism prevalent at the time forced a woman to enter a marriage as a source of sexual pleasure for her husband in exchange for food, shelter, comfort, safety, and a halfway decent quality of life and kept women subdued and dependent on men (Gilman). It was also Gilman who suggested that the efforts of a homemaker (laundry, childcare, and cooking) be “professionalized” in order for her to gain financial independence and no longer rely on her husband for support (Donovan 49). Gilman believed the dependency women were forced to have on their husbands limited their ability to achieve self-reliance.

Though this idea emerged before the Second Wave of Feminism, it was became dominant in the ideology. In the first pages of *The Second Sex*, written in 1953, Simone de Beauvoir illustrates the danger of a society that believes heavily in Social. She notes how the females of animal species found in the jungle are seen by the men only as creatures with whom to procreate. The very term female is limiting, she claims, because of how it confines women to the preconceived notion of what a female “should” be, instead of who she wants to be regardless of her biology, but also that the term “brings up in [man’s] mind a saraband of imagery ... the bitch in heat runs through the alleys, trailing behind her a wake of depraved odors; the she-monkey presents her posterior immodestly” (Beauvoir 3). This imagery brings to light the animalistic

view with which men look at women, confirming Gilman's previous, less primitive, depiction of a woman being acceptable in society only for a man's pleasure, and not to serve a greater purpose. Naturally, women wanted to be free of cultural confinement and saw the traditional roles of wife and mother as the chains to break. Betty Friedan echoes the concept of being chained by societal expectations in her book, *Feminine Mystique*, written in 1963. Friedan claims that the burden of femininity and the responsibilities of the housewife cause women to feel trapped, "wait[ing] all day for her husband to come home ... to make her feel alive" (Friedan).

In order for these chains to be broken, gender roles needed to be redefined. Women used occupations and job opportunities as tools to redefine gender roles and work and to change the way they were viewed in America. Women in the workforce became commonplace during World War II, when the country needed its remaining citizens, the vast majority of whom were women, to step into the roles left unoccupied by men who had been sent into battle. The nation had used various propaganda to urge women to literally get to work and do their part to help the U.S.A., the most famous image being an image of a tough, gently made-up young white woman rolling up her sleeves and brandishing a determined expression with the words "We Can Do It!" in bold print above her head. Rosie the Riveter first surfaced in the early 1940's, according to The National Museum of American History, and has been a representation of a romanticized kind of Feminism ever since ("We Can Do It!"). The reality is that Rosie's Feminism erases the efforts and experiences of women of color before and during World War II efforts. Neil A. Wynn, author of *War and Racial Progress*, states that while there were many positive employment reforms and opportunities available to Black men during the time of the Second World War, "the same positive comments cannot be made about the employment of Black women." This limitation of employment opportunities for women of color meant that if any

forward progress on the reformation of gender roles was to be made through the increase of women in the workforce, this change would be influenced only by white women, ignoring the needs of women of color. While Rosie tied her red and white polka-dot bandana around her brown curls, her fellow white women were mourning the loss of their poorly-paid Black servants and conducting weeklong strikes at Baltimore Western Electric over integrated toilets during 1944, and even leading to the Black women workers of Detroit being called the “largest neglected source of labor” in 1943 (Wynn).

Despite the racial disparities, traditional gender roles had begun to crumble as a result of women’s war efforts. Julia Kirk Blackwelder, author of *Now Hiring: Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* explains that most younger women who had grown up with the pressures of the Great Depression and the Second World War occurring nearly back-to-back were urged to find ways to provide for their families and their countries. This led to them becoming an integral part of changing women’s roles in the workforce. The capitalist culture of the country at the time, however, wanted to circumvent their efforts by promoting motherhood and domesticity as the favorable livelihood. Blackwelder states that Cold War culture led to the emergence of the “American Family” ideals, such as the need for “full-time attention to child nurtur[ing],” as represented in June Cleaver of Leave it to Beaver and as satirized in the 1998 film, Pleasantville (Blackwelder, 148). Betty Friedan, author of *Feminine Mystique*, discusses the reality that many young women during this time faced: the only life they were expected to pursue was one that revolved around “the domestic routine of the housewife” (Friedan 30). These ideals were enforced by efforts made by corporations on behalf of the desire to help commerce in the United States begin thriving now that a post-war euphoria had come over the nation. Advertisements encouraged consumers to invest in fancy home furnishings and appliances, thus

promoting feminine domesticity under the guise of, more or less, giving women shiny new toys to play with at home while waiting for their children to come home. Reinforcement of these “needs” came from the societal belief that if a woman chose to work of her own volition, not out of necessity to help her family, she was seen as “selfish” and to be “putting herself before the needs of her family” (“Mrs. America”). However, most of these new gadgets cost more than one husband could afford, thus launching more women into the workforce in order to assist in providing for her family (Blackwelder 148).

The jobs sought by women, however, did not necessarily pave a clear path to advancement immediately. Often relegated to clerical tasks, women began to experience occupational mobility only within a spectrum of “pink collar” jobs, or inferior jobs that were seen as created specially for working ladies. This was just yet another way, among the plethora of existing ways, to separate men from women; white collar jobs required higher levels of education and advanced skills whereas pink collar jobs did not (additionally, women were at an educational disadvantage as well, given that by the mid-1950s most girls who went to college only did so to find a suitable husband and, therefore, did not complete their college education (Friedan 16)). Most of the jobs offered to women, which were also the ones that saw the greatest amount of growth in the 1950s and 1960s, were focused primarily in teaching, nursing, and librarianship (Blackwelder 151). However, the 1970 census revealed that tens of thousands of women had climbed through the ranks of occupations in the fields of engineering, law, and medicine. All of this was accomplished despite the fact that the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination in the workforce on the basis of gender and race, was not being effectively enforced, and “gender quotas in education had not yet been challenged effectively.”

In fact, throughout the 1970's, the number of women who pursued higher education and earned college and graduate degrees had risen and as a result, the number of management and administrative positions held by women tripled, there were nearly five times as many women working in law, and the number of women scientists and engineers doubled. The increase of female influence in the workforce had a great impact on family life, but not necessarily in a positive way. With the increase in employment opportunities for women did not come a decrease in the expectations of women's influence in the home. Though parenting had become a more cooperative effort with both parents making decisions in regard to children, spending, and other life choices, the mother was still expected to bear the brunt of the housekeeping work. The added stress of domestic responsibilities on working mothers would often increase the likelihood of divorce (Blackwelder 193). As a result, the number of women who were at risk of living in poverty increased since the autonomy women had gained did not immediately earn them financial independence. This would not come until the early 1980's.

However, when the 1960's finally came about, and the Second Wave of Feminism began to swell, the development of new theory made even bigger waves than it would have otherwise partially because the quieter practice of existing theory had become the norm. Most of the new efforts and theory developed can be categorized as radical Feminist theory, a branch of Feminism that emerged towards the beginning of the 1970's as a response to the women who had become complacent after the accomplishments of the political activism during the Civil Rights movement. The resurgence in the women's movement during the 1970's came forth to restructure society and government backed by the strength of the past and a hunger for a new future. The Second Wave, which encompasses both radical Feminism and cultural Feminism (the two of which often intersect) still maintained a focus on reforming the political and legislative

climate of the nation similar to the Enlightenment Feminists and Suffragettes, but this time, there was also a higher focus on cultural reform. The ideas that qualify as cultural Feminism are ideas that “go beyond the fundamentally rationalist and legalistic thrust” seen in preceding waves (Donovan 31). Cultural Feminism was centered around the notion that efforts should not be made solely in order to achieve a measurable end; rather, they should be made with the intention of acting as a means to a greater transformation of how cultures viewed the place of woman in society.

In addition to working to reform education and workplace opportunities, as was mentioned prior, the vast majority of the Second Wave of Feminism aimed to bring to light the sexual aspect of womanhood and Feminism. During the early 1960’s, the American military presence in the Vietnam War had led to the development of “hippie culture.” Hippies were groups of people who diverged from the expected path of life, believed in peace over violence, and were strong proponents of “free love,” which meant having the freedom to engage in sexual relations with whomever you wanted whenever you wanted, regardless of marital status. This sexual freedom paved the way for a new society to begin forming. In this new society, sex would be seen as a method of discovering empowerment instead of being used as a tool by men to exert their power over women as it has been throughout history. The idea that sex was being used as a tool to enforce the oppression of women was also something that radical Feminist theory tried to expose and reform.

During this time, many Feminist writers were speaking out about the concept of sexual freedom and what impact it would have on women. As Friedan conducted research for *Feminine Mystique*, she discovered that most propaganda tried to convince women that the source of their unhappiness was related to not feeling fulfilled in their sexual relationships, as women had been

conditioned to correlate their femininity and womanhood with sexuality and fertility (Friedan 23, 29).

Dana Desmore, author of *Independence From the Sexual Revolution*, was both for and against the ideals of the “sexual revolution.” Desmore writes that her reasons for not supporting sexual liberation are not rooted in the desire to maintain puritanical, antiquated values enforcing a woman’s value by enforcing her virtue. Rather, the lack of support stems from a fear of women being manipulated into false empowerment by accepting isolated sexual freedom as complete freedom. She also fears that by being accepting of partial freedom, a type of freedom that includes women’s bodies being more readily available to benefit men, women will never truly rise above their role as accessories to male pleasure (Desmore). In *Independence From the Sexual Revolution*, she articulates her fears by saying “The unarticulated assumption behind this misunderstanding is that women are purely sexual beings, bodies and sensuality, fl[***]ing machines. Therefore freedom for women could only mean sexual freedom.” Furthermore, she expresses the concern that by allowing a woman sexual freedom, she will be unaware of how to also embrace the freedom of bodily autonomy and will be unaware of both her ability to and how to deny sex. In a tone similar to that of a tough-love big sister, Desmore encourages the “many girls who would be most free to fight in the female liberation struggle” to discontinue the “squandering [of] valuable energy” in order to pursue something potentially unfulfilling. Instead, she urges them to discover whether they are making choices because they feel socially obligated to do so or if the outcomes of their decisions are truly going to help them feel happy (Desmore).

Kate Millett, author of *Sexual Politics*, also makes it known that she does not feel a “sexual revolution” is a reasonable method of liberating women from subservience. It is expressed that the shift in sexual norms is important because of the persistent, negative cultural

implications of sex, but that it is neither the only problem women face nor is it the most important problem. Similarly to the Enlightenment period of Feminism, women were still being treated as sex objects and were subjected to lives of sexual subversion in favor of the desire of their partners. In fact, Millett argues that “sexual domination obtains nevertheless as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture” (Millett 25), meaning that it is a very persistent aspect that has not been easy to reform. In the beginning of the book, Millett even goes so far as to use the American Heritage Dictionary’s definition to explain patriarchy to her readers as “an institution of control,” in which men maintain power over women, and older men maintain power over younger men as well as all women (Millett 23). The power trip men experience in daily life also exists in sexual relations. Men are conditioned to associate cruelty with sexuality, hostility, and to associate their role with sadism and women with victimization (Millett 44, Friedan 262). Furthermore, Friedan claims that “several generations of American women have been successfully reduced to ... sex-seekers,” yet are still left yearning for more satisfaction from life (Friedan 261). Ideally, the reclamation of sexual empowerment by women for purposes of liberation from sexual domination as well as mutual enjoyment should encourage the progression of overall liberation for women, which the sexual revolution did not.

The sexual politics that radical Feminism and cultural Feminism alike worked to dismantle allowed for a third kind of Feminism to enter the public eye and gain notoriety: lesbian Feminism. That is not to say that lesbianism, the intense emotional and/or sexual relationship between two or more people who identify as women (“Lesbianism”), was invented during the mid-twentieth century. The earliest known use of the word “lesbian” relates to the adjectival term referring to Lesbos, a Greek island on which a woman named Sappho, who is renowned for her poetry depicting intimate relations between women, lived during ancient times

(“Lesbianism”; Mark). It was the increased, outward disapproval of the feelings of restlessness and longing caused by traditional heterosexual relationship practices that allowed for lesbian Feminist theory to gain more attention. The Radicalesbians, a lesbian Feminist group based out of New York, argues that to be a lesbian was inherently a way of practising Feminism since “a woman who devotes her energies to other women ... refuses to be identified in terms of a man” (Donovan 161), and also since woman-to-woman relationships existed without being dominated by gender roles.

The term “lesbian,” however, was not always a positive label. The Radicalesbians claimed that the men of that time were in the habit of using the term to strip any strong-willed, assertive, or powerful woman of her credibility and even humanity, as homophobia as well as sexism was extremely prevalent in society. “By definition an independent woman cannot be a ‘real woman’ - ‘she must be a dyke,’” writes Donovan in *Feminist Theory*. In turn qualifying as a real woman meant being “sexual property” of a man (Donovan 162). It is because of the homophobia present in society that lesbian Feminism, while welcomed by some Feminists, was also excluded or dismissed by others. Poet and essayist Adrienne Rich wrote an article by the name of “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience” in the year 1989, in which she chastises the heterosexual Feminists of the time for “the erasure of lesbian existence from so much of scholarly Feminist literature” (Charles and Hughes-Freeland 136).

It can be said that lesbian Feminism was, at its core, a more positive way of viewing the state of the nation’s gender politics during the 1960s and 1970s. Radical and cultural Feminism often pointed fingers at what was wrong, looking to assign blame, to pull away from standard familial values, and to establish not only independence for women as a whole, but also individual independence, which often led to a difficult and lonely road. Though all of the grievances that

shape radical and cultural Feminism are equally as valid as those that shape lesbian Feminism (in fact, the majority of them overlap), lesbian Feminism is not focused as significantly on creating change by pointing fingers at what the male population had done wrong, rather it fostered a sense of companionship and community among women. Though the term “lesbian” does refer to female homosexuality, the community developed did not have to be sexual in nature, and was one that spread a message of unity. A central point in lesbian Feminist theory was to overcome female separatism, the process by which women only met other women through their husbands for social or economic reasons, and join forces with any and all women outside male influence (Donovan 164). It had been considered “a total lifestyle that is valid in itself” (Donovan 163). Those who practiced or were involved with lesbian Feminist theory believed that change and advancement for women would come if women were to “...love ourselves and each other ... grow strong and independent of men ...” in order to “deal with them from a position of strength” (Donovan, 163). In contrast to the negative light in which men had painted lesbians by calling them derogatory names and stripping them of their femininity and humanity, and by leading people to believe they were diseased (Donovan 162), Adrienne Rich declared that the “lesbian in every woman” was the part of her that exuded strength, creativity, and energy (Donovan 136).

The concept of lesbian Feminism and sexual freedom / bodily autonomy came about largely during the second wave of Feminism but also persisted and remained foundational to the theories of third wave Feminism, which is said to have begun in the mid-to-late 1980’s, but truly picked up steam in the 1990’s and has continued into modern day. The second wave’s focus on lesbian Feminism had pushed for the acceptance of alternative sexual lifestyles, and for homosexual relationships (particularly among women) to be seen as valid and equal to heterosexual relationships. While this push continued into the third wave of Feminism, it

continued with the intention of not only increasing acceptance for and tolerance of non-heterosexual couples, but also of redefining what should be considered a normal family. Rebecca Walker, who is often credited with being the root of third wave Feminism, is the author of a book entitled *One Big Happy Family*, in which her essays “smash class, race, and gender stereotypes to collectively demonstrate the fluidity of the contemporary family unit” (“One Big Happy Family”). Donovan’s statement at the beginning of *Feminist Theory*’s eighth chapter, “Feminist theory ... pay[s] more attention to ... race, class, ethnic background, and sexuality,” reinforces the Feminism represented by Walker’s work.

Most of the work of the third wave acknowledges that women from different backgrounds, such as women who are not a part of the same race, class, sexuality, and even age, will have different desires and different experiences with oppression. Thus, an unspoken protest against “unitary label theory,” which would combine all oppression into one large single issue as opposed to giving each issue a proper platform, can be seen in works from the third wave (Donovan, 188). Instead of speaking of or writing about “Feminism” as a whole, similar to how the Enlightenment period and second wave did, it is discussed through lenses of class, race, sexuality, age, etc.

Additionally, the third wave of Feminism placed a higher value on a woman’s ability to choose her own life path as opposed to her duty to reject traditional feminine roles. During the second wave, women had begun to unpack the multifaceted ways in which the “feminine mystique,” as it was named by Betty Friedan, kept them in positions of insubordination by ways of childrearing, housework, and occupying their time with wifely activities. But, there was no consideration of the fact that some women may not want to reject their femininity and may legitimately be content with being a housewife. Was it wrong to remain a housewife because of

the historical implications of oppression, or could it be seen as a valid way of life if it brought the woman in question true joy and satisfaction? Iris Marion Young writes in her essay entitled “House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme” that while traditional homemaking activities were historically forced upon women, “the idea of home also carries unique liberating potential because it expresses uniquely human values” (Young). The third wave did continue to reject the idea that women were *required* by nature of a patriarchal society to look and act feminine and to enjoy feminine activities, but began to accept that a woman was within her right to engage in feminine expression if it was what she autonomously chose to do for her own pleasure.

Even still, the methods of activism continued to expand. Donovan in *Feminist Theory* that perhaps the most influential and long-lasting development of Feminist theory in the 1990’s was Ecofeminism. Karen J. Warren, co-author of the 1997 publication *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, defines the term “ecofeminism” as “the position that there are important connections between how one treats women, people of color, and the underclass on one hand and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment on the other” (Warren xi). The authors of *Ecofeminism* assert that the health of the environment impacts the health of people of color by extension, writing that “environmentalists did not recognize that certain issues and activities had disproportionate negative impacts on communities of color,” the reason for which also relates to issues of class inequality. In lower-income communities, the majority of which happen to be populated by people of color as a result of the systemic denial of proper housing to certain communities known as “Redlining” (Schwalbe 76-79), there is less money that can be put towards the purchasing of reusable shopping bags, products with more expensive biodegradable packaging, and even less money from the community that can be put towards trash collection and

recycling services. This causes a higher rate of waste, littering, and pollution in low-income neighborhoods.

Furthermore, Warren and Nisvan Erkal, the other co-author of *Ecofeminism*, illustrate the issues with the view most people have of ecofeminists from the outside. They claim that most who are not a part of the ecofeminist movement view ecofeminist as “kind, nurturing earth mothers” (Warren 114), which is an inaccurate representation of the grueling, difficult, and dirty (literally and figuratively) work that must be done by ecofeminists to help improve the state of the planet. It is yet another example of the public associating work done by women, and therefore women themselves, with concepts of gentleness, kindness, and softness.

In 2014, Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva, and Ariell Salleh collaborated and co-wrote a book entitled *Ecofeminism* (not to be confused with the aforementioned *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*). Though the delivery of the definition of “ecofeminism” in the 2014 publication is slightly more militant than in the 1997 publication, the ideology remains the same: that the health of the planet has been jeopardized by corporate greed and is therefore jeopardizing the health of those who live on earth. Mies, Shiva, and Salleh write that from an ecofeminist perspective, the corporate greed damaging the planet “is the same masculinist mentality which would deny us our right to our own bodies and our own sexuality, and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power to have its way” (Mies 14). Because of this connection, people involved in the ecofeminist movement believe that work done to help individual communities live a more eco-friendly lifestyle and the large-scale work done to save the planet from corporate practices and policies that risk the safety of nature go hand-in-hand to create an overall environment of health and flourishing for plants and people combined.

Simply put, as cultural awareness has grown, so has the overall goal of Feminist activism. In a world when white, cisgendered people were the only ones with any power, Feminist theory focused on the societal, cultural, and spiritual advancement of cisgendered, white women. As Kimberle Williams Crenshaw argues, the crossed disenfranchisement of people who were both black and who were women, the people who suffered from both a patriarchal society and white supremacy, were excluded and therefore the beginnings of Feminism did not accurately represent what “women’s issues” truly were (Crenshaw). However, with time, the conversation expanded to include women of color and lesbian women, then even further to include women of all sexual and gender identities, classes, races, abilities, ages, and religions (this comprehensive and inclusive version of Feminism is known today as “intersectional Feminism,” which Crenshaw also describes in the same video as being a situation in which enfranchisement is truly equal, “where women who had been subject to both were centered rather than marginalized” (Crenshaw).

In a perfect world, every facet of life would operate under a moral code in line with the ideologies of intersectional Feminism. This is not reality, but intersectionality is slowly becoming a more commonplace and celebrated idea in modern day society. The midterm elections of 2018 resulted in candidates being elected who would go on to compose the most diverse senate in history, with over 100 women taking seats and some of those women being lesbian, muslim, and/or women of color (Zraick). But how do ideas of intersectionality proliferate throughout society? In a world full of controversy behind Feminist ideals, how does one determine whether or not those ideals are in line with their own? In the following chapter, I will explore the impact of modern media and pro-Feminist and anti-Feminist propaganda on the development, or lack thereof, of a Feminist identity in women.

Chapter Three: How Language in Advertising Impacts Feminist Identity Development

Chapter one briefly discussed the impact of language on the development of identity through the lenses of psychological and developmental theory by using basic examples of human interaction to support the discoveries. It was explained that a person's identity, meaning the way a person "understands his or her relationship to the world" (Darwin), is impacted positively or negatively depending on the messages they receive from the outside world. In the first chapter, the "outside world" referred primarily to an individual's family and peers throughout their infancy, childhood, and adolescence into adulthood. However, in this third and final chapter, the impact of language on identity will be analyzed through a sociopolitical lens and the "outside world" will be represented by the evolution of advertisements for products directed towards women over the last seventy years.

John Edwards, author of *Language and Identity: An Introduction* argues that language is the foundation of societal behavior, stating that "language is a system, which implies regularity and rules of order" (Edwards 53). As a result, the people in charge of the language used to create laws, to determine religious values, to establish a moral code, and so forth, have the power to develop a society to his/her/their liking. To paraphrase Edwards, they are able to create a system which implies regularity and rules of order that benefit them, sometimes at the expense of others who have less control.

This phenomena is evident in modern-day Western society. As previously discussed in chapter two, the majority of the world is expected to abide by patriarchal values. The reason for this is that men were originally in control of the language used to develop societies and designed those societies to best fit their needs. This meant creating an environment where women were seen as inferior, as inessential members of this society outside of their childbearing abilities, and

as having less importance than men or even no importance at all. This is evident in the political documents analyzed in chapter two: John Adams's omission of his wife's concerns for womankind in the Declaration of Independence and Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England. In each document, women are either specifically labeled as property of man (either their husband or father), or they remain unmentioned and unrepresented entirely ("Abigail Adams"; Blackstone). The language used in these documents written by men who represent the politics of the time illustrates an unmistakable contempt for women. Turning general misogynistic opinion into official, legal documents that were then used to create a societal framework ensured that the contempt for and oppression of women would become a part of the foundation upon which the new societies were built.

The fight for Women's Suffrage in the mid-1800's to early 1900's is an early example of Feminists working to reform a fundamentally broken societal structure. Though the Suffragettes fought for multiple rights for women, they are most remembered for the work done to earn women the right to vote in political elections. This right was denied to them given that the founding fathers who organized the first political structure of the United States of America omitted women from participation in government. These men had been conditioned by the norms of the patriarchal society in which they lived to believe that women were fundamentally incapable of achieving the level of enlightenment with which all men were naturally endowed. In order for the Suffragettes to attain the right to vote for women in addition to their other endeavors, they not only had to change the minds of lawmakers and government officials, but they also had to begin to change the political language that these same lawmakers used to form women's identities.

It's no wonder why people don't automatically identify as Feminists. Feminist societal structures are not the default to which people are conditioned from infancy. Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalytic theorist, believes that people's developing identities have a tendency to conform to shared social rules (Benwell 21). When patriarchy is the prevailing shared social rule, patriarchal and misandrist values become the norm. Furthermore, Kathleen Woodward, Professor and Director of the Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington, believed that the 20th/21st century self has been over-socialized and that its identity development has been deeply internalized (Benwell 21). People do not realize they are being conditioned by society to conform to patriarchal values, which is the actual societal default, until they are introduced to alternative societal structure (however, Feminism is not the only alternative, for the duration of this paper, it will be used to represent the alternative to a patriarchy).

But, how does the introduction to other structures occur? At what point does someone realize that they are living in a world rife with patriarchal oppression, that there is an alternative that can be followed? Specific answers differ for everyone, but the message of Feminism is almost always conveyed initially through different forms of popular culture media. Specifically, it is the language used in advertising media that conveys the overarching ideals supported by Feminism. In *Language and Identity*, John Edwards describes Swiss linguistic theorist Ferdinand de Saussure's belief that the social aspect of language brings people together whereas Russian linguist Valentin Voloshinov believed the social aspect is what divides people (Edwards 64-65). In a way, both theories are correct. Feminist theory is the perfect example of something that can bring together those who see the need to fight for impactful sociopolitical change and cause those who identify with Feminist ideals to separate themselves from those who hold onto the default patriarchal sociopolitical values.

Popular, or pop, culture is defined by Andi Zeisler, author of *Feminism and Pop Culture*, as “any cultural product that has a mass audience.” The term “pop culture” took the place of the term “low culture,” given that most popular cultural products were consumed by those who did not live the blue-blooded lifestyle of people in high society who held high political influence (Zeisler 1). In the past, Feminists relied on music, Riot Grrl zines, suffragette sashes, and written publications to promote Feminist ideals. While some of those are still utilized in the modern age, advertisements are the most common form of communication used to convey ideas and send messages to a vast audience. They can be accessed by nearly anyone, as advertisements no longer appear solely in magazines and on billboards, but are also seen on television and social media and can easily be accessed on websites such as YouTube. The form of communication may change, but the message and promotion of Feminism stays the same.

Zeisler points out, however, that while not all pop culture promotes a Feminist message, a large amount of advertising, a form of consumable media, is directed towards a female audience. The deliberate pressure on women to purchase items such as makeup, clothing, certain beauty and cleaning products, etc. is a form of patriarchal media that seeks to benefit from the exploitation of women. This is very clear when considering the fact that the term “soap operas” stems from the “episodic melodramas” created by detergent manufacturers Procter & Gamble that were broadcast at a time when housewives would most likely be listening to the radio (Zeisler 4). Procter & Gamble’s choice to air shows created for housewives during the middle of the day proves that the default expectation of women was to stay at home to clean while listening to soap operas while their husbands were at work.

That Procter & Gamble expected women to stay at home to care for the home while their husbands did the work to earn income proves they had been conditioned to believe in the ideals

of a patriarchal society. In a patriarchal society, it is assumed that a woman will aspire only to stay home, keep the home clean and presentable for her husband, and to care for children. Had they believed women would be working during the day while husbands stayed at home (or that both people would be working), it is possible that they would have aired these melodramas at a different time of day for women to hear, or they would have created stories that catered to the interests of house-husbands to encourage them to buy their detergents instead of women. This would have been indicative of a way of thinking inspired by Feminist ideals, as it would have indirectly shown support for the destruction of typical gendered roles in society. However, it can be argued that this would still represent oppressive gender roles from a misandrist way of thinking (misandry is the opposite of patriarchy, the belief that women are superior to men). The creation of Procter & Gamble's "Soap Operas" and the times at which they were broadcast proves that women are subject to advertisements that encourage them to uphold traditional societal gender roles.

Throughout the Second Wave, pop culture advertisements for things such as Virginia Slim cigarettes would attempt to target women's newfound "liberation" and ability to smoke freely by publishing ads that contained stories of grown women from generations past being punished for smoking (even in private), and the tagline "You've Come A Long Way, Baby" (Zeisler 57). These kinds of advertisements were designed to hide exploitation under the guise of encouragement. First of all, by using advertisements to target women specifically, the cigarette companies would make more money from those who felt compelled to buy these cigarettes. *Ms. Magazine*, one of the first Feminist-leaning women's magazine publications created during the Second Wave of Feminism, actually included these Virginia Slim advertisements in its issues.

Ms. received multiple letters of complaint from readers, and the *Ms.* saleswoman argued that the ads may “alienate a Feminist audience” (Thom 132).

Second, the condescending language used in the tagline, which was likely written by a male given that it was rare for a woman to be a corporate marketing executive in the seventies, infantilizes the women being addressed. Mary Thom, author of *Inside Ms.*, even describes this particular ad as “annoying” for its infantilization. In the sixties and seventies, the majority of states in the United States had a minimum age of legal access of eighteen to twenty-one years old (Apollonio). Women who are eighteen to twenty-one years old and who are capable of legally purchasing their own cigarettes are not babies, despite the way in which the advertisement referred to them. Finally, similar to Dana Desmore’s worries that accepting a partial freedom (in this case, the freedom to purchase and use cigarettes) would cause women to stop fighting for true freedom (Desmore), this “ability” to spend money on products catered to the “empowered” woman truthfully did nothing for the women’s liberation movement. Instead, it just further lined the pockets of men who benefited from corporate capitalism who now had a brand new demographic to take advantage of.

Even still, hypocrisy prevailed. Feminists were referred to in demeaning and fear mongering terms such as “militants” or “libbers,” and the movement was even referred to as “a contagion” (Zeisler 60). Women could be empowered, liberated, free, and independent, but they could not be Feminists. Pop culture advertisements allowed just enough Feminism to be present in their media to entice the “empowered woman” of the day to buy their product, but not so much that they would actually be associated with or show support of the movement itself. Cathy Black, one of the women who would visit potential advertisers for *Ms.* magazine, is quoted in *Inside Ms.* as saying that the influential advertisers she would meet with would say things like “I

thought you were going to be one of those bra-burning, beating on the table, placard-waving whackos” (Thom 126). Mainstream culture and resistance to change had painted a negative image in the minds of the public that showed Feminists to be overemotional, irrational, and extremist. This made exposing the truth behind the real Feminist agenda and encouraging more people to identify with the movement increasingly difficult.

Today, it appears as though the ideals of Feminism are displayed proudly by celebrities and everyday people alike. The words “Feminism” and “Feminist” are displayed on patches and enamel pins that people can adhere to jackets and backpacks, the Instagram account @feminist has over 2.4 million followers (Feminist), and international popstar Beyonce even performed with a large light-up sign that spelled out “FEMINIST” behind her (Bennett). However, in the same article that discussed Beyonce’s use of a sign with the “F-Word,” it was revealed that as of 2014, the word “feminist” was still heavily associated with being “militant, radical, [and] man-hating” (Bennett). Zeisler argues that, to a degree, by the end of the 2000’s into the 2010’s, it had seemed as though supporters of Feminism had achieved their goals - that women had earned everything we wanted (Zeisler, 121). Obviously, given that women still have to fight to protect their basic rights such as reproductive freedom and adequate healthcare (McCammon), the idea that we have achieved the goals of Feminism is a misconception.

Modern advertisements, and the language therein, are the perfect depiction of how some companies are on board with pushing the Feminist movement forward, while others are relying on traditional gender roles to sell their product. The first product that will be analyzed is something that most people come into contact with once a day, soap, primarily the brands Dove, which has made a name for itself by promoting acceptance and female body positivity, and Old Spice, which relies on hypermasculine images and languages. In 2013, Dove released a video of

Gil Zamora, an FBI trained forensic artist with sixteen years of experience in San Jose, working with people - primarily women - to develop two sketches: one based on their own self image, and one based on how others view them (Dove US). This video was designed to serve as a reminder that people tend to see themselves in a very critical light. One woman made the statement that most women spend a lot of their time “trying to fix what’s not right” instead of admiring the beauty they do have. During the descriptions and the examination of the finished sketches, people used words such as “fat,” “sad,” and “closed” to describe themselves and their self-described portraits. However, when describing other people, they used words such as “nice,” “cute,” “open,” “friendly,” and “happy.” It is common for companies in the beauty industry to convince their customers that they will only be capable of achieving certain levels of beauty and enlightenment *after* purchasing their products, thus reinforcing the subliminal message that women must spend their money “fixing” themselves to be happy. Dove’s Real Beauty campaign is a refreshing series of advertisements that focus on self-empowerment, self-acceptance, and knowing one’s worth - all of which are key facets to the overall goal of the Feminist movement and therefore instrumental in developing a Feminist identity.

In contrast, where Dove promotes self-acceptance without blatantly promoting their products, Old Spice does the opposite. In multiple ads, men are seen encouraging other men (some also pictured on screen, some perceived to be watching the advertisement) to engage in traditional masculine behavior. Old Spice is known for its humorous depictions of masculinity and eye catching visuals. In one ad, a handsome, shirtless man stands in the shower, prompts women viewers to “look at [their] man,” and proceeds to shame men who do not use Old Spice and smell “like a lady” instead (Old Spice...*The Man Your Man Could Smell Like*). He then continues to explain how, by using Old Spice, the man in question could potentially take his

female partner on extravagant trips and ply her with expensive event tickets, diamonds, and even horseback riding. This is not only heteronormative, as it assumes that all women viewers will be in a heterosexual relationship, but it is also degrading. To imply that a man is unsuccessful if he does not use Old Spice further perpetuates the idea that a man's success must come in the form of being able to validate his egotistical, playboy desires. Additionally, to use smelling "like a lady" to emasculate the male audience watching these ads is to imply that it is a bad thing for men to do. This not only shames them for potentially liking certain scents of shampoo (which is such an insignificant thing to shame a person for), but it thereby implies that feminine scents, and therefore femininity and women themselves, are inferior to the hypermasculinity depicted by Old Spice.

Additionally, in the "New Dad" advertisement, a man is shown sleeping in bed when the sound of crying on the baby monitor wakes him up (Old Spice...*New Dad*). Just then, another man, presumably his friend, wakes him up and encourages him to go out. Within the first five seconds of this ad, the audience can already see that the father's merriment is being prioritized before his own child. This reinforces the idea that men are not eager to care for their children nor are they usually well-equipped to do so. Furthermore, after the father agrees to abandon his crying child in order to go partying, a female companion in the same bed - presumably, the baby's mother - sleepily mumbles and asks the men to bring her back potato skins. Once again, the audience is being told that it is the woman's job to sacrifice her own plans, and to stay behind and care for the child in question while the father is able to have a life of his own. Though there are no explicit words or individual phrases used that would discourage the development of a Feminist identity, the overall dialogue and situation promote and support a patriarchal family structure in which the woman's desires come second to the man's. Conversely, one of *Ms.*

magazine's award-winning issues, dubbed "The Fathering Instinct," published in May of 1974, portrays a man lovingly holding a baby on the cover along with titles of articles within such as "How The Economy Uses Housewives" and "13 Honest Views of Fatherhood" (Thomas). This particular magazine cover portrays how a Feminist view of fatherhood can lead to a healthier connection between father and child, and it also implies that leaving stereotypical, patriarchal parenting methods behind can be very beneficial (Partlow-Lefevre).

However, that is not to say that all men's soap advertisements are anti-Feminist and pro-hypermasculinity. In fact, Gillette recently released an advertisement that explicitly did not condone hypermasculinity and instead provided the perfect depiction of how Feminism and gender equality can benefit men as well as women (Gillette). In the ad, the dangers of excusing toxic behavior by saying "boys will be boys" are displayed by showing a row of fathers absentmindedly watching young boys fight (Gillette, 0:34). These dangers are then emphasized by interspersed clips of television shows that sexualize women, news clips regarding sexual assault allegations and investigations, and even an old Gillette ad in which a woman kisses a man on his clean-shaven jawline. This shows that Gillette, a company owned by Procter & Gamble, the same company responsible for the sexism-inspired "soap operas," has been guilty of appealing to toxic masculinity by using women in their advertisements as accessories to men in order to gain popularity, but that those in charge of advertising have learned how to do better by all. By using the first half of the ad to introduce the viewer to everyday behavior caused by the encouragement of toxic masculinity, such as a male employee "mansplaining" his female coworker's statements, Gillette is bringing to light just how common these issues are. Additionally, by showing a variety of different people who are affected by the problems caused by toxic masculinity, from a young boy being bullied to young girls at a pool party, and to adults

in the boardroom, it is further emphasized that toxic masculine behaviors impact nearly everybody.

The second half of the video is where the main Feminist message comes into play. The audience was asked in the very beginning of the ad if a world where sexual assault and bullying are the norm is “the best a man can get.” After the ad shows clips of past Gillette ads which were rife with masculinity, it can be inferred that the answer is “no,” and the remainder of the video proves that this world with its sexist norms is not the best a man can get. Including video clips of Terry Crews advocating for accountability among men, a teenager breaking up a fight between two others, and a man teaching a little girl, presumably his daughter, that she is strong, we hear the narration say that Gillette “believe[s] in the best in men.” They then explain that to them, the “best” in men is the ability to say and do “the right thing.” While these words are being spoken, the audience sees one man stop his friend from going after an attractive young woman on the street, another young man tell boys who are telling girls at a pool party to “smile, sweetie” to stop, and finally a father from the aforementioned row of fathers intervening in the fight and telling the young boys that violence “is not how we treat each other.”

Ultimately, the reason why this ad is so groundbreaking for the Feminist movement is because it is one of the first modern advertisements made by a company that sells its products to men (particularly, but not exclusively, cisgendered men) to confront the issues of mainstream male behavior instead of appealing to it. In the two Old Spice ads, the implication is that men are supposed to look and act sexy, tough, and assertive all the time. Gillette *does* explicitly point out these problems and what is wrong with them; they do not hide behind comfortable language used to make the true issues at hand more attractive to people who do not want to acknowledge that they have growing to do. In the ad, we hear men discussing the #MeToo movement, something

rarely shown in media outside news anchors reports. We see the word “sissy,” a shortened version of the word “sister,” appear over the head of the young boy crying because he is being bullied. Though it only appears for a second, it shows that boys have been taught that comparing another boy to a girl or something feminine is shameful because femininity is seen as inferior to masculinity. The audience also hears the narrator say “we can’t laugh it off” as derogatory TV show clips are played, reminding the audience that women and the mistreatment of women have been a joke to people who believe in the patriarchy for a long time.

Furthermore, in the C-Span clip of Terry Crews calling for men to hold other men accountable, we see above his name that he is speaking for the Sexual Assault Survivors’ Rights Act. The word “survivor” in particular is very important since, in the world of media coverage of sexual assault, many survivors are treated as victims, if they are seen as victims at all -- oftentimes, they are blamed for what happened to them and are not treated with respect. To see the word “survivor” being used in the context of people who have experienced sexual assault represents a shift in the mindset of how society, namely a patriarchal society, treats those who come forth to share their experiences with sexual assault.

There are those who did not see this ad as having a positive message. Gillette faced a great deal of backlash from men who felt as though Gillette was targeting *all* masculinity, not just that which creates toxicity. Michael Baggs for BBC reports that among the backlash and threats of boycotting Gillette faced, one person reacted by saying “in less than two minutes you managed to alienate your biggest sales group for your products. Well done” (Baggs). This backlash is indicative of how some are not yet ready to face the truth about the dangers of the patriarchy. Instead of seeing Gillette’s call-to-action as an opportunity to openly communicate about “taboo” topics for men, they interpreted Gillette’s message as an emasculating insult to

Gillette's customer base and as an attack on their lifestyles (which is very indicative of an individual's character if they feel that an anti-sexual harassment and anti-bullying ad is an attack on their way of life).

On the other hand, Tovia Smith for NPR commended Gillette for "volunteering to march bravely ahead into the culture wars" by creating content that sparks discussion regarding masculinity and gender roles (Smith). Damon Jones, the Vice President of Procter and Gamble who is also in charge of Global Communications and Advocacy, responded to the backlash by stating "we recognize that we have a responsibility ... to step up and improve the language and the expectation that we were setting for ourselves" in an interview with Michelle King for *Forbes* (King). This open acknowledgement of a need to "improve the language" surrounding masculine culture allows for people to discuss why they believe what they believe in regards to masculinity and expected male behavior, how it impacts those around them, and what can be done to create a way of being masculine that omits the toxicity. Jones believes that this ad represents a higher standard to which men should be holding themselves, and that this higher standard is "better for guys, women and society" (King).

Encouraging men to be their best for "the boys watching today" who will become "the men of tomorrow" is a monumental step forward in helping men develop a Feminist identity. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the default attitudes and behaviors in a patriarchal society generally benefit men. It tells them that they are superior, that they are entitled to what they want, and that they belong at the top. These are all positive things that lead to young boys and men wanting to align their identities with the Patriarchy that promises to lift them up. However, what is not discussed is the detriments men must deal with that are caused by toxic masculinity, a result of this default. They are told that showing emotions and crying is bad and that they must

“man up.” This leads to violence and an inability to honestly communicate what one is feeling. To see a company the size of Gillette begin to break down gender roles for men shows that men can be Feminists too. By not shying away from openly saying “bullying,” “sexual assault,” discussing how excusing toxic behavior with “boys will be boys” only leads to greater toxicity, and introducing ways men can “do the right thing,” they have opened the dialogue for men to discuss Feminist topics in a positive light, to begin to see the truth of the movement, and even potentially begin to incorporate Feminist values into their identities.

Companies that advertise men’s razors are not the only ones working to change gender roles. While Gillette focused on overall behavior and promoting a no tolerance policy for toxic masculinity, Billie, a new razor brand that sells “Razors Meant for Womankind” has made groundbreaking progress in the depiction of womens’ bodies in that their advertisements actually show bodies with hair on them (Billie “The New Body Brand”). In fact, Billie is currently the only one to do so. A rival brand called Flamingo has a similar product setup and mission, though each picture on the Flamingo website shows hairless bodies. The open depiction of hair on women is a very Feminist action given that modern Feminist views focus on breaking down traditional beauty standards by promoting body acceptance in all forms. A quick visit to the “About” page on their website leads the reader to a section on their philanthropy and how they give back to other charities that supports women and their well-being, which reinforces to potential customers that they are not strictly interested in turning a profit; rather, they are also concerned with promoting and supporting the health and happiness of women all over (Billie “About”). The “About” page also includes short paragraphs that discuss the problems with mainstream razors marketed towards women. Among these problems are the use of unhealthy ingredients (the concept of being transparent about ingredients and what chemicals are used in or

omitted from the products is a key component to the EcoFeminist movement discussed in the previous chapter) and the Pink Tax: the extra money added onto products marketed towards women such as deodorants, soap, clothing, and - you guessed it - razors (Billie “About”). Billie’s Feminist ethos, attitude towards the Pink Tax, and overall challenge of typical beauty standards speaks volumes in comparison to other women’s razor brands as it is the only one to treat women’s bodies as beautiful while also showing that they grow hair from (literally) the nose to the toes.

Though there is minimal language associated with their advertisements, the messages read through loud and clear. In a Summer 2019 advertisement, the company depicted a diverse handful of women, both in terms of race and body type, in bathing suits at the beach (Billie). Some were shown sitting with legs spread, defying the “sit like a lady” expectation of women to be modest while others were shown getting out of or relaxing in pools. Some of the women featured had no body hair, and others wore it proudly. The overall campaign was dubbed “Red, White, and You Do You,” using the last third to remind women of their bodily autonomy, the importance of doing what makes them feel comfortable, and of their beauty, regardless of whether or not they conform to patriarchal beauty standards.

Soap and razors are, for the most part, used by men and women alike. This is why there are two markets, and why it is easy to identify the patriarchal, masculine themes that often appear in products made for men and either the traditionally sexist themes used to advertise products made by men for women or the modern Feminist values in products made by women for women. However, it is safe to say that women and people with female reproductive systems have cornered the market on period products. Because of this exclusivity in target audience, the Feminist themes are often much more evident in these advertisements. Some companies that

have gone the extra mile in creating ads that use words to encourage girls to find their own strength and power are Tampax, Seventh Generation, Always, and Lola.

First, Tampax's most recent Youtube video advertisements are an accurate representation of modern tampon advertisements. The video for the Tampax Radiant products include a woman of color sharing examples of how they are "anything but basic," but what is most interesting about this particular video is the fact that the actress uses the word "blood" (Tampax...*Anything but Basic*). Approximately ten years ago, Tampax had a series of ads for their Tampax Pearl product featuring a woman dressed in green bearing a small red box, which was meant to represent "Mother Nature" and her "Monthly Gift." She also often appeared either during a model's photoshoot or a woman's romantic dreams (in which the woman gleefully thanks the man for comparing her eyes to sprinkles on a donut, perpetuating the women-as-consumable-items theme), thus further associating women with sex and heteronormativity (Tampax...*Outsmart Mother Nature*, Tampax...*Romance*). The term "Monthly Gift" along with the small red box, though it was a clever use of symbolism, made it easy for the company to avoid including words that actually pertained to the menstrual cycle. The euphemism was clear enough to get the point across, but still refrained from being direct and instead relied on discrete nicknames to discuss something so common. This discretion further implied that menstrual cycles, and therefore the truth about female bodies, were things to discuss in private, to hide, and that they did not belong in mainstream media. The new Tampax Radiant ad erases some of the stigma surrounding periods. As it was mentioned, the unabashed use of the word "blood" shows that Tampax is no longer afraid to use words that have been used to make women feel weak, inferior, or disgusting for centuries.

In addition to openly discussing blood, there is mention in the Tampax Radiant advertisement of how the grip allows the user to get the tampon into “just the right place,” which is almost as close as a mainstream tampon ad has ever come to mentioning vaginas (Tampax...*Anything but Basic*). Until, of course, Seventh Generation, a company committed to ingredient transparency and promoting the health of its customers as well as the planet, released a video of comedian Maya Rudolph playing the drums and declaring loudly that menstruators have a right to know what goes in their vaginas. “Vagina” is yet another word that is regarded as disgusting and is not welcomed in mainstream conversation despite phrases like “having the balls” and “being a dick,” all of which referring to male genitalia being acceptable. The only common slang words for a vagina are c*nt, p*ssy, and tw*t, all of which are used as an insult - thus further associating the female body with negativity (Seventh Generation). The use of the word for basic female anatomy is also groundbreaking, though it shouldn’t be, because it is proof that a woman’s body does not have to be discussed in sexual terms only, but it can be discussed in terms of its health and anatomical needs.

This is something that has been at the forefront of Feminist advocacy for a very long time. Thom recalls in *Inside Ms.* that in 1976, *Ms.* had lost an advertising account with Chevrolet after “a midwestern sales manager” who worked for *Cosmopolitan* magazine had sent highlighted copies of every *Ms.* article that had any reference to lesbianism to Chevrolet’s general manager (Thom, 141). Part of being a Feminist and identifying as such is understanding that women and the female body is not the submissive, shameful, and objectified vessel the patriarchy has turned it into. Maya Rudolph’s brazen screaming and repeating of the word “vagina” for a tampon advertisement in a completely unsexualized setting, which could also represent the general anger women feel at being given limited choice in period products that are

both effective and safe, is a sign that people are beginning to treat the female body in a less sexual way. When people with female bodies are unable to discuss menstrual and sexual health as well as anatomy, among other things, in a safe manner with access to accurate medical information, the possession of a female body becomes a burden because it becomes something that develops problems that are near impossible to fix. When the female body is fully accepted as something more than just a sexual object for the pleasure of men, then it no longer exists in society as a burden to the person who inhabits it.

Yet another period product company that has begun conversations regarding women's abilities, bodies, and capabilities is Always, the pad counterpart to Tampax's tampons. Always in particular began the "#LikeAGirl" campaign approximately six years ago to illustrate how words can impact the self esteem of young girls (Always). In the campaign video, a group of adult women, a grown man, and a young boy are asked to demonstrate what they believe fighting like a girl, running like a girl, and throwing like a girl looks like. Each person does so in a very frail, weak, and frilly manner, thus proving that they have been conditioned by society and other external factors to associate girls with weakness and industriousness. Following that, young girls, approximately ten years old, are asked to complete the same actions. They do so with strength, determination, and confidence. Just as "Feminist" has become a word associated with negativity and anger, the very word "girl" became associated with incapability. This campaign challenges its viewers to ask why they grow up to believe girls to be weak when in reality, they are strong. At the very end of the video, one of the grown women is shown powerfully declaring that young girls who are told they do things "like a girl" should "keep doing it, because it's working," and that being a girl is "not something [to] ... be ashamed of" (Always). This message of power and use of empowering language challenges people to question why they associate femininity with

weakness when that ideal could not be further from the truth. By Always demonstrating that girls are associated with negative traits when they are truly full of power and strength, they begin to introduce language that redefines what it means to be a girl. This redefinition and use of positive language in place of negative is exactly what is needed to open the eyes of people of all ages and genders to the reality of what the oppressed, in this case women, are capable of. This will, in turn, lead to interest in, support of, and identifying with the Feminist movement.

Finally, Lola is another brand that sells period products with a side of Feminism (Lola). Like Seventh Generation, Lola uses Ecofeminist rhetoric declaring that the company was started by women, for women when they discovered the hidden truth about how tampons were not just made of cotton. Their goal, according to the biography on their main Instagram page, was to develop “trusted period and sexual health products delivered to your door” (Lola). However, unlike Tampax, Always, and Seventh Generation, they are one of the few brands that also market condoms to women. This is also indicative of a positive cultural shift towards Feminist ideals given that, around the same time that *Ms.* magazine lost their account with Chevrolet for supporting lesbianism, *Essence*, a magazine marketed towards women of color, also faced a similar fate after publishing an article that discussed women’s sexual health and orgasms (Thom 141). According to Susan Adams for *Forbes*, 40% of people who purchase condoms are women, yet the majority of brands, such as Durex, Trojan, ONE, Skyn, and Magnum, are marketed towards men (Adams). Lola decided to challenge that idea as well, and created a condom brand that was both environmentally friendly and that women felt comfortable buying.

Part of the reason why it is absurd to market mainstream condoms to men specifically is because men are not the only people who enjoy safe sex nor should the responsibility be placed specifically on them. When condoms are marketed only towards men, women are discouraged

from buying them and they are encouraged to assume that, if they engage in heterosexual intercourse, a man will take responsibility for supplying the condoms. This puts the sexual health of both partners at risk and further promotes the notion that a woman should neither be prepared for, nor should be in charge of her own pleasure - a puritan notion that encourages slut-shaming and victim blaming.

Additionally, the need for condoms marketed towards females was born out of the sexist, degrading, and even violent condom advertisements marketed towards men. Two brands that have published particularly vulgar condom advertisements are Durex and Four Seasons. First, Durex created an ad for their XXL condoms that feature no words, but a woman's glossy, red mouth with bandages on each corner ("Durex-XXI-Ad"). The implication in this advertisement is that while performing oral sex, this particular woman's partner split the sides of her mouth in order to make enough room for the phallus. While the ad was most likely intended to be seen as humorous given that it plays on the competition among men that the man with the largest penis is the most masculine and powerful, the reality of the ad is that it promotes violence against women. To promote the engagement in sexual activity so aggressive that bandages are needed as a result of injury is to imply, once more, that women's bodies are vessels for the sexual pleasure of men and that their comfort, and in this case, their safety, does not matter.

Furthermore, Durex also has published advertisements in Thailand that promote rape culture. Jon Springer of *Forbes* reports that, in 2014, an ad appeared on Durex Thailand's Facebook page containing the phrase "twenty-eight percent of women that fought ended up consenting" (Springer). Springer notes that the ad was up for approximately ten hours before being removed, and that Durex Global was in such opposition to the notion that they refrained from referring to it as an advertisement at all. However, Springer argues that "in the age of the

Internet, corporate publicity posted on social media is inevitably perceived by the public as advertising” (Springer). To imply that 28 percent of women who at first declined sexual propositions or advances is to also imply that the remaining 72 percent of women who fought did not consent. Instead, the implication is that the 72 percent of women became victims of sexual harassment, assault, or even rape. Furthermore, this ad promotes the concept that coerced consent is valid consent, when the reality of the matter could not be farther from the truth. Consent is simply the action of agreeing to do something or giving permission for something to happen – consent to sexual activity can be enthusiastic (only when all partners understand what the other parties are agreeing to engage in), or it can be coerced, forced, or given as a result of manipulation. In this case, the consent is not given freely and any acts that ensue can be termed as sexual assault or rape. When a person is coerced into consenting, the consent does not come from a place of enthusiasm or willingness to partake in sexual activity for purposes of mutual enjoyment. Rather, it comes from places of annoyance, fear, confusion, and / or manipulation, among other variables. The Thai Durex ad that boasts twenty-eight percent of women were coerced into sexual activity is boasting the ability of men to manipulate women into pleasuring them without any consideration to their feelings, desires, boundaries, or humanity.

Four Seasons is also a condom brand that has published off-color advertisements in the hopes that the sexist remarks would be interpreted as humorous. For example, there are photos on the Four Seasons Twitter page from a 2012 Brisbane event in which women pose with a box of condoms held at their tailbone, and the only part of their body that is visible is what extends from their lower spine to the tops of their thighs (Four Seasons Condoms, “NAKED...”). The segmentation of a woman’s body to sell condoms is just another one of the numerous examples of how the female body is marketed to men in a sexual fashion in order to sell products. Though

condoms are used primarily for sex, the implication of these advertisements is that a woman/female-bodied person is always involved, and that the focus of sex should be on the utilization of a female body for man's pleasure, not the mutual consent and enjoyment of all parties involved.

There is also a video featured on Four Seasons' Twitter page in which people discuss their ideal "cock size" while holding roosters (Four Seasons Condoms *What Kind of...?*). The euphemism is clever, if not cliché, and there is a larger group of people represented as there are women of different ages portrayed along with men and two drag queens. Despite the inclusivity, this ad is still problematic given that the drag queens and men remain fully clothed in either t-shirts, pantsuits, or long-sleeved cocktail dresses while the young woman is shown standing in a bikini and high heels. The older woman, though there is never a shot in which we see her full body, is depicted for a few seconds holding a chick with her cleavage on full display behind the chick. Once more, the two cisgendered women are the only ones whose bodies are put on display in order to sell a product. The other actors portrayed are simply there for comedic value.

A woman who sees herself portrayed in these roles - the woman who proudly bears the painful scars from the night before, the one who was successfully manipulated, and the one whose body is sexualized to entice men - is bound to believe that this is the true nature of sexual activity and even life if not introduced to an alternative way of thinking. Men, who cornered the market on condom advertising and production for so long, created advertisements that would help promote the patriarchal, misogynistic agenda that would benefit their sex lives. This left women to be taught that sex was not something for them to enjoy, rather something they engaged in to keep their husbands happy. People across the board were not taught to ask for enthusiastic, unambiguous consent. Instead, men were taught to take and women were taught to give.

One company's condom advertising has brought the need for true consent back into the public eye: Trojan. Their "#AskForConsent" campaign features photos of people who are not in sexual positions to promote healthy sexual communication. Instead, the advertisements use words and questions to open the discussion on when sexual behavior is welcomed and when it should be avoided. For example, one such advertisement shows a young girl in a party dress, looking into the camera in a semi-sultry fashion. The words across the advertisement are "Does she want to go home with you, or does she just want to go home?" Additionally, there is another series of ads that picture homosexual and interracial couples in gentle intimate positions, such as smiling while wrapped in blankets or one kissing the other on the forehead, that say "Way to Ask" (Trojan Brand Condoms "'Yes' is the best foreplay"). This phrase is followed by a number and a question that would open up the dialogue between partners on what they do and don't feel comfortable consenting to.

Trojan's inclusive, pro-consent ads are a refreshing change from the norm, not just for women who are often the victims of sexualization and objectification in condom ads, but also for everyone who has been subjected to toxic masculinity in condom advertising across the board. Through these ads, non-heterosexual couples are given the chance to see themselves represented in the media, not as the deviance from the norm or the stereotypical "gay" couple. Instead, they are portrayed as what they are - humans with feelings and sexual desires that are normal and should not be perverted or used for humor. Additionally, by introducing simple, approachable ways to have conversations regarding sexual health and behavior that for so long have been seen as taboo or uncomfortable, Trojan is beginning to associate equality, respect, and mutual enjoyment with sexual activity. Each of these associations coincide with Feminist values, and help to promote the belief that sex should be something healthy, safe, and enjoyable for all

regardless of gender and sexual orientation. As more people begin to believe in these sexual practices, the more they will believe in Feminist politics over the toxic masculinity of patriarchal politics.

To recapitulate, John Edwards reported in *Language and Identity: An Introduction* that systems of language imply regularity and order to form and work within social structures, though this system is “arbitrary” as it only works as long as everyone who uses this system agrees to the meanings behind the language in question (Edwards 53). Advertisements that use sexist and patriarchal language reinforce the notion that sexism is a regular part of life and that people should follow the order set forth by a world in which Feminism is neither represented nor supported. Throughout history, the forced conformity to this structure has created a false sense of mutual agreement with this order and regularity. As such, this “agreement” creates shared social rules among the aforementioned users. Jacques Lacan believes these rules are what people’s identities conform to subconsciously (Benwell 21). The shared social rules that have been agreed upon by our modern society in which sexist and patriarchal language are what prevails in place of Feminist language, are that men are the superior party and women, non-cisgendered individuals, and non-heterosexual individuals are inferior, and therefore identify as such. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Ron Darvin and Bonny Norton define an individual’s “identity” as the way in which they “understand their relationship to the world” (Darvin). This understanding is not developed autonomously. In fact, it cannot be developed autonomously given that, according to German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the external factors people experience in life influences their understanding of their relationship to the world in too deep a way to autonomy to be present (Benwell, 24).

In turn, because society has come to agree upon a language system in which heterosexual, cisgendered men are superior to all others, from the time they are toddlers, those living in this society are stripped of their autonomy in regards to determining their relationship to the world (this is the point at which Erikson's second stage of identity development - Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt - begins, according to Stephanie Scheck. From the ages of two to three years old, people are led to believe that they must align their identities with patriarchal ideals. They are then left to either remain content in complacency or to reform their identities to align with a more empowering rhetoric. The incorporation of Feminist language in advertisements over the last handful of decades has begun to break the cycle in which people are conditioned to develop their identities around sexist social structures. Instead, it causes a shift in which shared social rules are seen as agreeable and which are not. As society begins to agree upon shared social rules that use Feminist language to promote inclusivity, equal rights and representation for a wide variety of demographics, and promotion of self-love regardless of gender, those living in this society will no longer be bound to patriarchal identities. They will be supported by a community of people who identify as Feminists.

Conclusion

Just as people are not explicitly taught to match their identities to their nationalities, hobbies, or religions, people are not explicitly told to identify as Feminists. There are even people who believe in Feminist ideals and support the goals of the movement, yet still do not identify as Feminists. However, the message of Feminism is still spread and it is still able to enlighten those who envision a future in which political oppression on the basis of sex, gender, sexuality, race, age, and religion is nonexistent. People's identities will be shaped, either reinforced or contested, by the media they consume. The language used in the dissemination and advancement of media concerning modern Feminist theory and the positive or negative connotations therein will impact those who are exposed to it regardless of whether or not they are deliberately looking for exposure to Feminist media.

Feminism is no longer a secret. No matter how hard the patriarchy tries, this is one cat they will not be able to grab and shove back into the bag. To continue creating advertising media that promotes antiquated, patriarchal ideals is to do further harm by upholding unhealthy standards for men, women, and those who do not fit the typical gender binary (and therefore do not fit into the patriarchy's box of what is acceptable). Instead, it should be the goal of advertisers to create content that appeals to a wider demographic, promotes ideals of acceptance and autonomy, and that does not undermine the role of women and other marginalized groups in society. This will benefit the company in question as well as society, as there will theoretically be an increase in sales as a result of the wider demographic who feels inclined to support the company due to their inclusive advertising. More importantly, it will also result in future generations being exposed to media and language that encourages them to support Feminist

ideals, align themselves with a less oppressive sociopolitical group, and will inspire tolerance, acceptance, and destruction of outdated, oppressive patriarchal norms.

To have researched a broader scope of media examples could have allowed for increased evidence that gendered products promote specific sociopolitical ideals; however, there is also the possibility that the focus of study would not have been narrow enough to obtain accurate data. I believe that the third chapter of this project, which contains the majority of support for my thesis statement, is merely one lens through which a researcher could observe this topic. Outside the world of hygiene advertisements, there is significant data in other forms of advertising such as those used to sell household cleaning and home improvement products, clothing, and food and beverage. There is also a plethora of evidence in the progression of women's roles in television shows, political media, musical media, and various occupational industries such as the culinary, medical, architectural, and scientific industries, to name a few. Further research could be conducted on language specific to the different advertising sectors as well as language, practices, and behaviors specific to occupational industries, and how these modes of communication and behavioral practices either encourage Feminist progress, stifle Feminist progress, or inspire people in unideal situations to fight for necessary change in policy. This research is important and necessary as it will depict the vast scope of people who are harmed by patriarchal oppression and who are empowered by the notions of Feminism. Until Feminism is the prevailing sociopolitical group with which people align their beliefs, identities, and behaviors, there will always be work to be done.

“My own definition is a feminist is a man or a woman who says, yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we ... must do better.” - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*

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