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The more things change, the more they remain the same: The feminist rhetoric of Elizabeth Cady Stanton

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THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE
THEY REMAIN THE SAME: THE FEMINIST
RHETORIC OF ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

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The More Things Change, the More They Remain the Same:

The Feminist Rhetoric of Elizabeth Cady Stanton

(TITLE)

BY

Lisa S. Strange

THESIS

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**The More Things Change, the More
They Remain the Same:
The Feminist Rhetoric of Elizabeth Cady Stanton**
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Running head: Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Abstract

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's rhetoric contributed greatly to liberal feminism. Stanton's five decades of public speaking launched a social movement that influenced powerful policy makers. This thesis examines Stanton's contributions to feminist rhetoric.

First, the basic tenets of liberal feminism are defined by examining the work of several feminists in the last 200 years. This paper explains the historical development of liberal feminism, starting with Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792. Several works from feminists in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries are analyzed. Through this process, one can understand Stanton's commitment to this feminist philosophy.

Second, Stanton's large body of work is examined. Stanton's commitment to women's rights is evident through the examination of her speeches. As both a writer and a public speaker, Stanton advocated societal reform to ensure women's equality. Stanton's first speech delivered at the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention in 1848 provided an ideal forum for the formulation of a feminist ideology. In this speech Stanton articulated themes that were repeated throughout her lifetime. In the decades that followed, Stanton repeated these themes in her speeches before influential leaders of the legislatures. The arguments in these speeches are analyzed in accordance with the liberal feminist philosophy.

Next, Stanton's lyceum lecture, "Our Girls," is analyzed according to its historical significance and its enduring qualities. Stanton's purpose and arguments in this lecture reflected her skills at audience adaption. In this lecture Stanton addressed the crucial concerns of femininity and womanhood. Through audience adaption, Stanton tailored her message to an unsophisticated group of young girls and women. Stanton's arguments regarding beauty standards for women have endured for over a century. These societal problems still plague American women today.

This thesis concludes with suggestions for future research. Critics are encouraged to examine speeches by influential women of Stanton's era. Furthermore, traditional definitions of effectiveness in public speaking are redefined.

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CHAPTER 1

THE RHETORIC OF ELIZABETH CADY STANTON:

POWERFUL AND ENDURING

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's contributions to feminist rhetoric in the nineteenth century are unparalleled. Stanton's rhetoric launched a social movement that touched all parts of daily living. Because of Stanton's powerful impact on women's rights, Waggenpack (1989) described her as the first voice of women and a "larger than-life figure whose impact is still being felt" (p. 2).

The Fight for Suffrage

Stanton was the Suffrage Movement's founder, organizer, and chief public advocate. Stanton's speech at the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention in 1848 was an ideological statement that became the foundation of the women's rights movement in the United States (Campbell, 1989a). The convention, inspired and organized by Stanton and Lucretia Coffin Mott, was the first public protest in America against women's unequal political, economic, and social status. Stanton's radical and controversial demand for the ballot became an official part of the women's rights movement that year (Kraditor, 1965).

Stanton's speech at the Seneca Falls Convention marked the beginning of a public career that extended for more than

forty years. Throughout these years Stanton advocated societal reform to ensure equal opportunity for women.

In 1854 Stanton brought her message of reform to the New York Legislature. This speech was significant because it was the first time a woman had addressed a legislative body consisting solely of men. (Waggenpack, 1989).

In many situations Stanton faced a hostile, unsympathetic, male audience. As a means of overcoming these huge obstacles, Stanton adopted a rhetorical style that powerful leaders could respect. These speeches offered complex legal arguments based on natural rights philosophy. Stanton supported her claims by citing state and federal constitutions, statutes, and legal authority. This strategy was appropriate and effective since the high culture of the nineteenth century valued rationality as a basic philosophy (Campbell, in press).

In women's rights convention speeches Stanton appealed more directly to women. Even so, Stanton still relied heavily on natural rights arguments and detailed refutation. Since these speeches were adapted to powerful and elite women, Stanton relied heavily on constitutional and legal authority, supported by logical and rational arguments.

Prolific Writer and Lecturer

Publications

Although Stanton is most famous for her public speeches to public policy makers and women's rights activists, she was also a powerful writer and lyceum circuit lecturer. For example, Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage compiled and edited the first three volumes of History of Woman Suffrage in 1881. In Stanton's autobiography she described the long, difficult process of writing these books:

I had never thought that the publication for a book required the consideration of such endless details. We stood appalled before the mass of material, growing higher and higher with every mail, and the thought of all the reading involved made us feel as if our life-work lay before us. Six weeks of steady labor all day, and often until midnight, made no visible decrease in the pile of documents (Stanton, 1898/1971, p. 237).

Upon the completion of her work Stanton said, "I welcomed it with the same feeling of love and tenderness as I did my firstborn. I took the same pleasure in hearing it praised and felt the same mortification in hearing it criticized" (Stanton, 1898/1971, p. 237).

Four years later, in 1895, Stanton wrote her most controversial work, The Woman's Bible. This book attacked the use of Scripture to condemn women to an inferior position (Griffith, 1984). Stanton's decision to publish this controversial book was very risky and demonstrated her deep commitment to women's rights. She realized that the publication would create "a great sensation" (Stanton, 1898, 1970, p. 453). In fact, the clergy protested the book, denouncing it as the work of Satan.

Even the younger suffragists, led by Carrie Chapman Catt, condemned the book and its author at the National American Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1896. Stanton's friends were also embarrassed by the scandal, believing her book was injurious to the women's rights cause (Griffith, 1984).

Even so, The Woman's Bible was a best seller and was translated into several languages. Many of Stanton's conclusions about Biblical sources and interpretations are widely accepted today (Griffith, 1989). The Woman's Bible demonstrated Stanton's continual support for women's equality in all realms of life. Furthermore, this book showed Stanton's willingness to address controversial topics in order to ensure women's equality, regardless of widespread objections and condemnation.

The Lyceum Circuit

In addition to Stanton's work as a suffragist and renowned author, she gained popularity as a lyceum circuit lecturer. The lyceum brought entertainment and education to small cities in the West (Griffith, 1984). For eight months of each year, between 1869 and 1882, Stanton lectured on the circuit. During a typical tour Stanton would spread her message to over thirty-six cities.

The lyceum circuit was a vigorous and strenuous undertaking, especially for a woman in her fifties and sixties. Stanton often traveled fifty miles a day in subzero temperatures to keep her appointments. Stanton faced poor weather, unreliable transportation, irregular meals, and uncomfortable hotels (Griffith, 1984). Stanton expressed the obstacles she faced in the following sentences: "The hardships of these lyceum trips can never be appreciated except by those who have endured them. With accidents to cars and bridges, with floods and snow blockades, the pitfalls in one of these campaigns were without number (Stanton, 1891/1971, p. 261).

Nevertheless, Stanton considered the lyceum to be a great adventure. Not only was she paid well (approximately two hundred dollars per appearance), but she was able to bring her message to a wider audience. Stanton believed that reform should begin in "our homes, in our nurseries, in

ourselves," rather than in conventions (Griffith, 1984, p. 162). The lyceum circuit provided Stanton with the opportunity to take women's rights into the homes and lives of ordinary, non-elite girls and women. As Stanton explained, "I feel that I am doing an immense amount of good in rousing women to thought and inspiring them with new hope and self-respect, that I am making the path smoother for ... all other dear girls" (Griffith, 1984, p. 163).

Stanton developed a variety of lyceum lectures that dealt with household management, baby care, divorce reform, property rights, and birth control. But her most favorite and famous address was "Our Girls."¹ In this lecture she urged young women to strive for independence and self-fulfillment. This address was so popular that Stanton earned thirty thousand dollars from this speech alone (Griffith, 1984, p. 165).

Critical Analysis

"Our Girls" is worthy of critical study for several reasons. First of all, Stanton adapted this speech to a specific audience: women who were not reaching their full potential because of societal customs and tradition.

¹ The edited text of "Our Girls" was supplied to me in correspondence with K. K. Campbell (personal communication, September, 1992). The unedited version can be found in B. Waggenspack (1989) The Search for Self-Sovereignty, New York: Greenwood.

Because of the unusual audience, "Our Girls" is unique in Stanton's repertoire.

"Our Girls" differed from Stanton's speeches on suffrage, which were adapted to powerful male leaders and elite women. Because of this, Stanton developed specific rhetorical strategies for the lyceum that differed from her public speeches. In general, "Our Girls" developed arguments based on common sense and supported by examples, instead of detailed legal proofs and refutation (Campbell, in press). "Our Girls" demonstrated Stanton's skills at audience adaption. The differing purpose, choice of arguments, and rhetorical strategies all merit further study as they demonstrate how a rhetor adapts a message to a specific audience and context.

Second, Stanton's theme in "Our Girls" diverged from her suffrage speeches. Although Stanton still advocated societal reform to ensure equal opportunity, the focus was different. In "Our Girls" Stanton emphasized a woman's right to self-sovereignty and autonomy. This speech focused attention on the social and psychological barriers which prevented female independence. This theme diverged from Stanton's suffrage speeches which concentrated on legal and constitutional reform.

Specifically, Stanton insisted that images of youth and beauty prevented women from becoming independent and self-

sufficient. Stanton argued that the search for true beauty should begin from within oneself. Most importantly, Stanton refuted traditional standards of beauty and redefined womanhood and femininity (Waggenpack, 1989). She created an ideological framework that affected every aspect of a woman's life.

Finally, "Our Girls" made a significant contribution to rhetorical history. Most importantly, the feminist principles Stanton advocated in 1872 have endured for over a century. Stanton's arguments concerning youth and beauty have contemporary appeal.

The feminist ideology articulated by Stanton in "Our Girls" (1872) transcended the immediate context and still engages women today as effectively as it addressed women a century ago.

Campbell (in press) described the contemporary appeal for Stanton's work: "Her works still speak to us because they address issues of continuing concern, her arguments are grounded in cherished cultural values, and her skills with metaphor, analogy, and humor bring her ideas vividly before our eyes" (p. 187).

Specifically, Stanton's concerns about youth and beauty, illustrated in "Our Girls" remain concerns for modern feminists. Images of femininity, addressed in this speech, still impede the progress of women. More generally,

Stanton's speech reflects a continual commitment to a liberal feminist philosophy.

To understand Stanton's commitment to liberal feminism, it is important to understand the tenants of that philosophical position. Chapter two explains these tenants in their historical context, illustrating the work of key feminists in the last 120 years.

Stanton's rhetoric made a significant contribution to the liberal feminist tradition. Chapter three provides the reader with an in depth look at Stanton's feminist philosophy. This chapter also demonstrates the contrast between Stanton's suffrage speeches and her lyceum lectures.

Stanton's speeches on suffrage were directed to powerful men and women who could create change (Waggenpack, 1989). When Stanton spoke before legislatures she was forced to adopt rhetorical strategies that appealed to an all male audience. The women Stanton addressed at women's rights conventions were also powerful because of status or wealth. The speeches on these occasions, once again, emphasized logic and rationality (Campbell, 1989a).

Chapter four will critically analyzes Stanton's lyceum lecture, "Our Girls" on two grounds. First, "Our Girls" will, is analyzed according to the historical context. This analysis demonstrates how Stanton varied her rhetorical

strategies according to the specific audience. Stanton's audience, purpose, and rhetorical strategies are examined.

Second, Stanton's speech is analyzed according to the enduring feminist arguments that she presented. Stanton's arguments concerning femininity and womanhood are compared to contemporary arguments. Specifically, chapter four shows how Stanton's feminist arguments have endured for over a century.

CHAPTER 2

LIBERAL FEMINISM: TWO CENTURIES OF HISTORICAL
DEVELOPMENT

For centuries women have been fighting for equality. Through essays, lectures, and books, women have struggled to have their voices heard. Early feminists in the United States faced obstacles unknown to men. (Campbell, 1989a). In the course of this struggle a feminism, which drew from liberal or "natural rights" philosophy, was initiated and developed. This chapter will trace the historical development of this liberal feminism, citing several feminists from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Today, although alternative perspectives exist, liberal feminism has attracted the greatest number of followers and is most associated with the mainstream feminist movement. Contemporary feminists such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem have expanded on liberal principles first advocated more than two hundred years ago.

Evolution of Liberal Feminism

Mary Wollstonecraft's essay of 1792 marked the beginning of liberal feminist thought (Tong, 1989). Later nineteenth century suffragists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, and Susan B. Anthony, adopted this liberal philosophy.

These feminists have had many diverse goals over the years, which can be divided into two broad areas: equal opportunity and sexual equality. Equal opportunity encourages equal access to education and employment for women. Sexual equality addresses the broad area of gender (i.e., femininity and masculinity). Liberals argue that in order to achieve sexual equality, women should not be confined by gender roles, which among other things, reinforce unrealistic images of youth and beauty that impede women's progress. Lastly, liberal feminists advocate working within the system for change, instead of revolting against it. Liberals support economic, social, and legal changes to benefit women. Each rhetor examined in this thesis contributed significantly to the development of one or more of these goals.

Eighteenth Century

Mary Wollstonecraft (1792).

Mary Wollstonecraft is considered the first major feminist. Wollstonecraft wrote her famous essay, "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," at a time when the economic and social position of European women was in decline (Tong, 1989). Wollstonecraft's essay, based on the Enlightenment philosophy of the time, celebrated rationality, intellect, and individuality:

... the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge, that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society; and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed collectively (Wollstonecraft, 1792/1975, p.91)

Wollstonecraft went further than most philosophers of her time, however, claiming that rationality extended to women. She denied psychological differences between men and women. At the same time, she recognized the powerful cultural forces that shape individuals. According to Wollstonecraft, the only psychological differences between the genders could be blamed on the socialization process:

I must declare what I firmly believe, that all writers who have written on the subject of female education and manners ... have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been; and consequently more useless members of society (Wollstonecraft, 1792/1975, p. 103).

While Wollstonecraft recognized the obstacles that women of the 18th century faced, she believed that equal education was the solution (Tong, 1989). Accordingly, women should be provided with equal opportunities in education in

order to develop their rational and moral capabilities. Only an educated woman could be an autonomous decision-maker. Like later liberal feminists, she celebrated individual choice in all aspects of life (Tong, 1989).

In the following passage Wollstonecraft argued that women had to have equal access to education in order to achieve individuality and rationality:

... the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart ... to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason ... They [women] have been drawn out of their spheres by false refinement, and not by an endeavor to acquire masculine qualities (Wollstonecraft, 1792/1975, p. 103).

Wollstonecraft further argued that the feminine traits associated with femininity actually created dependent and weak women. For example, she showed how women, in particular, overemphasized youthful beauty as a prerequisite to obtaining a husband. As she explained:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers that ... outward obedience ...

will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives (Wollstonecraft, 1792/1975, p. 100). Wollstonecraft attacked the eighteenth century system which glorified the way women looked, as opposed to their real accomplishments. Wollstonecraft argued that a woman's physical education should not focus on superficial issues such as appearance:

... in the education of women, the cultivation of the understanding is always subordinate to the acquirement of some corporeal accomplishment. Even when enervated by confinement and false notions of modesty, the body is prevented from attaining that grace and beauty which relaxed half-formed limbs never exhibit (Wollstonecraft, 1792/1975, p. 105).

According to Wollstonecraft, one could not judge the true character of woman's mind until she was treated equally to man. Wollstonecraft recognized that women appeared childish as a result of socialization, but that could change:

I am fully persuaded that we should hear none of these infantile airs, if girls were allowed to take sufficient exercise, and not confined in close rooms till their muscles relaxed, and their

powers of digestion destroyed. To carry the remark still further, if fear in girls, instead of being cherished, perhaps created in the same manner as cowardice in boys, we should quickly see women with more dignified aspects. It is true, they could not then with equal propriety be termed the sweet flowers that smile in the walk of man; but they would be more respectable members of society, and discharge the important duties of life by the light of their own (Wollstonecraft, 1792/1975, p. 154).

Wollstonecraft's hope of equal opportunity for women in all realms of life, especially education, laid the framework for modern-day liberal feminism. Her belief that differences between men and women were a result of cultural forces, not biological destiny, is also fundamental with contemporary liberal philosophy. Her emphasis on sexual prejudice (which we today call sexual discrimination) is very similar to contemporary concerns. Finally, Wollstonecraft's discussion of youth and beauty continue to be issues for modern feminists.

Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century many feminists continued to support Wollstonecraft's arguments. Lucy Stone, John Stuart

Mill, and Susan B. Anthony were three major contributors of this era.

Lucy Stone (1855).

Lucy Stone spent her entire adult life fighting for the equality of women. Stone is most famous for the protest she and her husband signed as part of their wedding ceremony. Their protest argued that marriage should be an equal partnership. Stone is most famous for her refusal to take her husband's name upon marrying. Those feminists who followed her lead were often referred to as "Stoners" (Schneir, 1972).

Like Wollstonecraft, Stone recognized the limited opportunities women were given in education. As she explained:

From the first years to which my memory stretches, I have been a disappointed woman. When, with my brothers, I reached forth after the sources of knowledge, I was reprov'd with "It isn't fit for you; it doesn't belong to women." Then there was but one college in the world where women were admitted, and that was in Brazil (Stone, 1855/1972, p. 106).

Furthermore, Stone's rhetoric (1855) explained the employment inequities facing women. As she stated, "I was disappointed when I came to seek a profession worthy an

immortal being--every employment was closed to me, except of the teacher, the seamstress, and the housekeeper" (p. 106).

Stone summarized the discrimination women faced in one concise sentence: "In education, in marriage, in religion, in everything, disappointment is the lot of woman" (p. 106).

Stone (1855) argued that women should not be confined by gender roles, but should be given the opportunity to decide their role in society. These arguments were extreme, but insightful for the time period. As Stone (1855) said, "Leave women, then to find their sphere. And do not tell us before we are born, even, that our province is to cook dinners, darn stockings, and sew buttons" (p. 107).

Stone's discussion of gender roles and equality in education supported the liberal feminist philosophy. She believed that women should be given the opportunity to decide their role in society, unhindered by custom or tradition.

John Stuart Mill.

In 1869 John Stuart Mill's Subjection of Women continued to support the liberal feminist philosophy.² But, unlike Wollstonecraft and Stone who focused specifically on gender roles and equal opportunity, Mill concentrated on legal reform. Mill argued that:

² Although the authorship of Subjection of Women is usually attributed solely to John Stuart Mill, others argue that Harriet Taylor collaborated with Mill (Earles, 1993).

the legal subordination of one sex to the other-is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other (Mill, 1869/ 1972, p. 163).

Even though this passage may seem extreme for the 1800's, Mill was a reformist, not a revolutionist. Mill advocated working within the system to change legal, economic, and social conditions (Tong, 1989).

Although it was not his primary focus, Mill was also concerned with gender-role conditioning. He said that differences between the sexes were a result of different treatment, not biology.

Mill's reference to obedience and submission was very similar to Wollstonecraft's concerns. He, too, believed that women were socialized differently than men.

All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite of men; not self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others (Mill, 1869/1972 p. 168).

Mill argued that any differences in intellect between men and women was a result of inferior education, not

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biology. Mill supported equal opportunities for women in the educational and political realms. Women, he said, should be given the right to vote, not as an extension of domesticity, but as an individual right that would help society as a whole. Once women were given these rights, then their true characters could be judged.

What is now called the nature of woman is an eminently artificial thing--the result of forged repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others. It may be asserted without scruple, that no other class of dependents have had their character so entirely distorted from its natural proportions by their relation with their masters ... (Mill, 1869/1972, p. 170).

Mill, like Wollstonecraft and Stone, advocated equal opportunity for women in all spheres of public life. He explained differences between men and women as a result of socialization. He celebrated women's intellect and reasoning capabilities. Although his rhetoric was more colorful (e.g., calling women "slaves" and men "masters") Mill's work expanded on the basic ideals of Wollstonecraft (Jaggar & Struhl, 1978).

Susan B. Anthony (1898).

Susan B. Anthony is most famous for her protest in 1872. At this time she and fifty other women registered to

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vote in Rochester, New York. On election day Anthony cast her ballot, breaking the law. She was arrested and the trial that followed brought her widespread notoriety (Schneir, 1972).

By 1898, Anthony was still advocating equal education for men and women. Anthony's speeches pointed out the blatant contradictions in the United States government:

The great distinctive advantage possessed by the men of this republic is that the son of the humblest citizen, black or white, has equal chance with the son of the richest in the land if he take advantage of the public schools, the colleges and the many opportunities freely offered. It is this equality of rights which makes our nation a home for the oppressed of all the monarchies of the old world (Anthony, 1898/ 1972, p. 140).

According to Anthony, women needed same educational opportunities as men. Anthony's logical arguments stressed natural rights philosophy, emphasizing rights guaranteed to all United States citizens.

In addition, Anthony emphasized women's lack of professional opportunities. Like Stone, Anthony recognized the predicament professional women faced.

There are many women equally well qualified with men for principals and superintendents of schools, and yet, while three-fourths of the teachers are women, nearly all of them are relegated to subordinate positions on half or at most two-thirds the salaries paid to men ... sex alone settles the question ... (Anthony, 1898/1972, p. 141). Anthony's speeches reflected her concern for equal opportunity. Her belief that women should have equal access to education and employment supported liberal feminist philosophy. The essays and speeches of Wollstonecraft, Stone, Mill, and Anthony are representative of early feminist rhetoric. These famous works of the 18th and 19th centuries laid the foundation for the century to come. These early works provided a framework for contemporary liberal feminism.

Twentieth Century

Early Feminists

Foss (1989) defined feminism as "the belief that men and women should have equal opportunities for self-expression" (p. 151). Other definitions emphasize the "belief in and commitment to equal rights and opportunities for women" (Tierney, 1991, p. 139). Modern feminists have created ideological frameworks based on the equality and

liberty defined by Wollstonecraft, Stone, Mill, Anthony, and Stanton. This feminist philosophy applies to all spheres of life including work, family, and sexuality (Jaggar & Struhl, 1978).

For many women, feminism has become a way of living, encompassing all spheres of public and private life. Some characterize feminism as a personal and private struggle. Others define feminism as influencing others and taking a stand.

The basic tenets of contemporary liberal feminism, have remained consistent over the last 200 years. The philosophy articulated by Wollstonecraft in 1792, and reiterated by Stone, Mill and Anthony in the 1800's, serves as the foundation of modern liberal feminism. Although many factions have developed under the broad category of liberal feminism, the basic ideology has remained unchanged. Most importantly, contemporary liberals deny all forms of biological determinism. They argue that psychological differences among men and women are learned, not inherited (Jaggar & Struhl, 1978). The argument remains that a woman's biological sex should not determine her role in society (Tong, 1989).

Contemporary liberal feminists focus on equality of opportunity and individuality. Liberals don't criticize inequalities in wealth, position, or power, as long as the

distribution is not based on uncontrollable characteristics like race or gender. In general, liberals argue that each individual should be able to rise in society as far as his or her talents will permit, unrestrained by law or custom (Jaggar & Struhl, 1978).

In addition to equality of opportunity, liberals share a common goal of sexual equality, also called gender justice. Women must be freed from oppressive gender roles that have given them a lesser place in society. Some liberal feminists argue that unrealistic images of youth and beauty prevent women from achieving sexual equality. All of these arguments stem from the liberal belief that each individual should be given the equal opportunity to succeed, unhindered by tradition or custom.

Finally, liberals focus on reform. This focus includes reform of laws and attitudes. Like Wollstonecraft and Mill, contemporary liberals believe that their goals can be achieved by working to change the current legal, economic, political, and social systems. Strategies for achieving their goals include legal action, working to pass legislation, lobbying, and forming coalitions. Some of their concerns include safe abortion laws, equality in employment and education, and the admittance of women into the military (Tierney, 1991). All of these issues reflect a concern for individual choice and equal opportunity.

A number of rhetors contributed significantly to feminist thought in the twentieth century. Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Carrie Chapman Catt were major forces behind the suffrage movement in the early 1900's. Betty Friedan, Caroline Bird, and Gloria Steinem are representative of the second wave of feminism in the 1960's and 1970's. All of these works demonstrate the enduring qualities of liberal feminist principles.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman spoke for women's rights throughout the United States in the early 1900's and was a prolific writer on women's issues. Gilman believed that economic dependence was the main barrier to a woman's progress (Schneir, 1972, p. 230).

Although Gilman's book, Women and Economics, was written in 1898, her rhetoric had twentieth century themes and influenced women during the early 1900's (Schneir, 1972). She argued that women should not be confined to sex-defined jobs that kept them economically dependent on men. Although they have appeal today, many of Gilman's arguments were radical by the standards of her time.

As she stated, "wives, as earners through domestic service, are entitled to the wages of cooks, housemaids, nursemaids, seamstress, or housekeepers ... (Gilman, 1898/1972, p. 234). Gilman defined gender roles that

confined women to the home as a "dense prejudice" (p. 237). According to Gilman, society should not define a woman's role in the family. Instead a woman should be given the individual opportunity to decide what is best for her. These arguments against gender-roles were reiterated by later liberal feminists.

Carrie Chapman Catt.

Carrie Chapman Catt was president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) from 1900 to 1909. Catt dedicated her life to women's suffrage and supported a liberal feminist perspective. Catt stressed that "sex-prejudice" was the greatest obstacle facing women. As she explained, sex prejudice constituted "the oldest, the most unreasoning, the most stubborn of all human idiosyncracies" (Catt, 1902/1989, p. 470).

In the following passage Catt defined prejudice:

What is prejudice? An opinion, which is not based upon reason; a judgment, without having heard the argument; a feeling without being able to trace from whence it came. And sex-prejudice is a pre-judgment against the rights, liberties and opportunities of women. A belief, without proof, in the incapacity of women to do that which they have never done. Sex-prejudice has been the chief hindrance in the rapid advance

of the woman's rights movement to its present status, and it is still a stupendous obstacle to be overcome (Catt, 1902/1989, p. 470).

This passage clearly defined sexism and sexual discrimination as applicable to Catt's contemporaries. Even today, sexual discrimination is the "chief tower and fortress of the opposition to equal rights for women" (Catt, 1902/1989, p. 471).

In 1911, Catt focused on the economic hardships women faced because of sexual discrimination. Catt clearly defined the predicament women of the early 1900's faced in her speeches:

Modern economic conditions are pushing hundreds of thousands of women out of their homes into the labor market. Crowded into unskilled employments for want of proper training, they are buffeted about like a cork upon a sea. Everywhere paid less than men for equal work, everywhere discriminated against, they are utterly at the mercy of forces over which they have no control (Catt, 1911/1972, p. 291).

Surprisingly, once women gained the right to vote in 1920, support for the movement declined. In fact, the ballot did little for woman's advancement, as no issue unified women activists. A majority of women did not vote, as they received little encouragement from family and

friends. In fact, interest and enthusiasm in the women's rights movement did not reappear for over forty years (Campbell, 1989a).

The Second Wave

By the 1960's the women's movement was reinvigorated. Betty Friedan, Caroline Bird, and Gloria Steinem continued to support the liberal feminist philosophy.

Betty Friedan.

In her book, The Feminine Mystique, Friedan (1963) described misery and emptiness which many traditional wives and mothers felt in the 1950's and 1960's. Friedan's book was ground breaking, because she addressed crucial issues that had been ignored for forty years. Furthermore, Friedan's book created widespread support for contemporary feminism.

The Feminine Mystique helped explain the inequities associated with the female gender. She showed how women were socialized into accepting the nurturing, selfless roles of housewife and mother. Women believed that these roles were crucial to their acceptance in society and to their overall happiness.

Furthermore, women were depicted as "young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine; passive, gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies, and home" (Friedan, 1963, p. 30).

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These stereotypical traits became negative forces that greatly affected women's self-esteem.

This image left many women feeling inadequate and lonely. Although the "mystique of feminine fulfillment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary American culture," many women were dissatisfied (Friedan, 1963, p. 14). Even so, women were ashamed to admit their dissatisfaction because they really didn't understand it themselves.

Friedan (1963) described this phenomenon as "the problem that has no name" (p. 9).

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone (p. 11).

Friedan (1963) showed how women were socialized into accepting gender-roles. Because of these strong cultural forces, women were denied equal opportunities in the public realms of life. As she explained, "They [women] learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights--the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for" (p. 11).

Friedan (1963) advocated a "new life plan for women" (p. 326). She urged women to "stop conforming to the conventional picture of femininity" (p. 327). But, she recognized that the struggle would be difficult and painful. Friedan's discussion of gender-roles and reform ignited the women's liberation movement anew.

Caroline Bird.

Four years after Friedan's book, Caroline Bird wrote Born Female (1968), which attacked restrictive prejudices that prevented women from succeeding in the work force. Her arguments supporting equal pay for equal work and against gender-roles, directly supported a liberal feminist perspective. These arguments were very similar to the concerns of Friedan five years previously.

Bird (1968) argued that the system was destroying, wasting, and hiding valuable talents of women. As she explained, "The price of occupational success is made so high for women that barring exceptional luck, only the unusually talented or frankly neurotic can afford to succeed. Girls size up the bargain early and turn it down" (p. xi).

She showed how little girls continued to be socialized much differently than boys. Although toddlers are treated similarly, by age two differences were evident. Her

arguments were amazingly similar to those of Mary Wollstonecraft. As Bird explained:

Despite her mother's leanings to frills and ruffles, the toddler packs mud pies side-by-side with boys, and pumps on swings as zestfully as boys, and fights boys stubbornly for the vacant swing when she must. She pedals her tricycle as fast as she can, just like the boys, and she may organize the neighborhood group that includes both boys and girls. She wears shorts, like boys, although more brightly colored, and snow suits and jeans, like boys. She climbs trees and bruises her knee, like boys (p. 40).

But, by age three, "Girls are encouraged to be clean, neat, tender little charmers, while boys are expected to be physically competent. They don't have to be talkers" (Bird, 1968, p. 41).

As Bird (1968) argued, this "Invisible Bar" prevented women from succeeding throughout life. For example, she said, "women aren't brought up to assert themselves, but a man expects to find his way to the top" (p. 48). Even if a woman does succeed, "she encounters a new obstacle: the hostility of men" (p. 49).

Bird (1968) advocated reform in societal attitudes and law. She hoped that "men and women of the future would

share the work of home and shop on the basis of individual abilities and convenience " (p. xii).

Gloria Steinem.

Gloria Steinem became interested in the woman's movement in the 1960's. During the second wave of feminism Steinem wrote dozens of articles for popular magazines. The following passage, which she called her "feminist realization," described the contemporary feminist perspective of the 1970's:

Women are human beings first, with minor differences from men that apply largely to the single act of reproduction. We share the dreams, capabilities, and weaknesses of all human beings, but our occasional pregnancies and other visible differences have been used--even more pervasively, if less brutally, than racial differences--to create an "inferior" group and an elaborate division of labor. The division is continued for a clear if often unconscious reason: the economic and social profit of males as a group (Steinem, 1972/1983, p. 113).

Steinem (1972/1983) also discussed how language reflects attitudinal reform. Phrases like "sexual harassment," "battered women," reproductive freedom," and "prochoice" reflect a commitment to feminist values by

addressing crucial feminist concerns. Steinem believed that these changes were signifying commitment to reform.

Steinem's (1979/1983) commitment to equal opportunity for women in the work force was also reflected in her articles. She believed that "it's as natural for us to have salaried jobs as for our husbands--whether or not we have young children at home" (p. 168). She advocated working as a "human right ... that applies to men as well as women" (p. 171). She believed that only through working could women become independent adults.

Unless we see a job as part of every citizen's right to autonomy and personal fulfillment, we will continue to be vulnerable to someone else's idea of what "need" is and whose "need" counts the most" (p. 171).

She hoped one day that all women would "learn to find productive, honored work as a natural part of ourselves and as one of life's basic pleasures" (p. 172). Like those feminists before her, Steinem continued to support the liberal feminist tenants of equal opportunity and reform.

Alternative Perspectives

Although liberal feminism is the perspective with which most feminists associate themselves, other less conventional perspectives have emerged during the 20th century that can't be ignored. Marxist, radical, and socialist feminism are

three alternative perspectives that are akin to, though less pervasive than, mainstream liberal feminism (Jaggar & Struhl, 1978).

Marxist feminists believe that capitalism is the root of a woman's oppression. According to this perspective, capitalism must be replaced by socialism in order for women to be free. Radical feminists, on the other hand, believe that a woman's gender is fundamental to her oppression. Many radicals advocate separatism as a solution. Socialist feminists focus on both classism and sexism. Socialists advocate a classless, genderless society in order for woman to be liberated (Jaggar & Struhl, 1978; Tong, 1989).

Despite these recent developments, however, liberal feminism still attracts the greatest number of followers (Tierney, 1991). The ideals articulated by Wollstonecraft, Mill, Stone, and others have remained the core of modern feminism. The National Organization of Women's Bill of Rights is evidence of the continuing endurance of the liberal tradition.

National Organization of Women (NOW).

The basic goals of liberal feminists are articulated clearly in the NOW Bill of Rights which were adopted in 1967 and continue to be the foundation of the organization:

We demand that equal opportunity be guaranteed to all women, as well as men ... That the right of women

to be educated to their full potential equally with men be secured by Federal and State Legislation, eliminating all discrimination and segregation by sex ... at all levels of education, including colleges, graduate and professional schools, loans and fellowships, and Federal and State training programs ... (Jaggar & Struhl, 1978, p. 108).

The principles of liberal feminism have endured for more than two centuries. Stanton's rhetoric is clearly connected to this tradition. Her rhetoric reflected a commitment to liberal feminism that still appeals to contemporary audiences. Chapter three examines Stanton's contribution to feminist rhetoric, by examining seven of her public speeches.

CHAPTER 3

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON: INITIATOR OF THE WOMAN'S
RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the Suffrage Movement's preeminent public spokesperson, philosopher, and rhetorician (Campbell, in press). She delivered numerous speeches spanning five decades. From her first speech at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 to her final speech delivered to the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1892, Stanton clearly supported the liberal feminist tenants of societal reform and equal opportunities for women.

Seneca Falls (1848)

On July 14, 1848 a call for a women's rights convention was printed in the Seneca County Courier and the North Star. The convention, organized by Stanton and Lucretia Coffin Mott, was designed "to discuss social, civil, and religious conditions and rights of women..." (Lutz, 1940, p. 45).

The convention was significant because it provided an "ideal forum for the testing and formulation of an ideology" (Campbell, 1989a, p. 50). Much of the ideology presented in the Declaration of Sentiments reflected a liberal feminist point of view.

Stanton helped author this document which was fashioned after the Declaration of Independence. Thus, she was both the leading force behind the convention, as well as the

presenter of the Resolutions. Stanton's position is evident in the Declaration and in her speech that followed the reading of the Declaration.

The Declaration of Sentiments

The Declaration of Sentiments, a parody of the Declaration of Independence, encouraged women to work within the current legal system, not revolt against it as the Declaration of Independence had previously advocated.

Campbell (1989a) explained the noteworthy differences:

Instead of separation, women demanded admission.

Instead of dissolution ... women promised to use legal and persuasive means to achieve their ends, including,

if possible, the pulpit they had condemned ... These

differences indicate that, despite the radical

character of individual demands, the supporters of the

Declaration of Sentiments perceived theirs to be a

reformist, not a revolutionary movement. They did not

wish to separate, but to be admitted (pp. 56-57).

The document invited women to "employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the state and national legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf" (Stanton, 1848/1989, p. 36). This strategy was consistent with the philosophy of earlier liberal feminists such as Wollstonecraft and Mill.

The basic liberal feminist philosophy was articulated in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Sentiments: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ... " (Stanton, 1848/1989, p. 34). This theme of equality was reiterated in the third resolution: "Resolved, That woman is man's equal--was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such" (pp. 37-38).

The Declaration of Sentiments and its twelve Resolutions advocated equal opportunity and individual development for women. The protest included a list of eighteen grievances attacking society's discrimination against women.

For example, women were discriminated against throughout the legal system including marriage, divorce and property laws. Furthermore, women were barred from voting, attaining profitable employment, and attending universities. Even the church confined women to an inferior position.

Stanton and others at the convention demanded that these unjust practices be changed. They insisted that women "have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges

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which belong to them as citizens of the United States" (Campbell, 1989b, p. 36).

The resolutions reinforced the feminist themes of equality and reform. Stanton demanded that "such laws that conflict in any way, with the true and substantial happiness of woman, are contrary to the great precept of nature and of no validity" (Campbell, 1989b, p. 37). As Campbell (1989a) explained, happiness referred to "equality of opportunity to develop as an individual" (p. 57).

The twelfth and most important Resolution demanded that women be admitted on equal footing with men in all public realms:

Resolved, That the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women, for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce (Campbell, 1989b, p. 39).

The philosophy articulated by the Declaration of Sentiments became an ideological framework for the Suffrage Movement. Inspired by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the demands celebrated liberal feminism. In sum, the Declaration attacked sexual discrimination at its basic roots and advocated legal and societal reform.

Speech at Seneca Falls Convention (1848)

Stanton's own speech at the Seneca Falls convention marked the beginning of her career as a public speaker. As Campbell (1989a) explained, Stanton's speech was "the first whose content was feminist in modern terms" (p. 59).

Stanton's speech articulated many themes which created the foundation of feminist ideology. These themes were repeated throughout her lifetime.

Stanton clearly articulated the liberal ideology in the following passage:

... woman stands by the side of man, his equal, placed here by her God, to enjoy with him the beautiful earth, which is her home as it is his, having the same sense of right and wrong, and looking to the same Being for guidance and support (Stanton, 1848/1989, p. 43).

Throughout the speech Stanton repeated this theme of equality. Through refutation, Stanton argued that man was not intellectually, morally, or physically superior to woman. Stanton refuted Biblical passages from the Old Testament that were often used to subordinate women.

After arguing that men and women were equal, Stanton advocated legal reform:

... we are assembled to protest against a form of government, existing without the consent of the

governed--to declare our right to be free as a man is free, to be represented in the government ... to have such disgraceful laws as give man the power to chastise and imprison his wife, to take wages she earns, the property which she inherits ... the children of her love; laws which make her the mere dependent on his bounty (Stanton, 1848/1989, p. 53).

According to Stanton, education was another area that needed to be reformed. Stanton attacked the "Education Society"--a system that discriminated against women. Stanton argued that the right to an education was fundamental to a woman's happiness.

What, let me ask, is the real object of education. Just in proportion as the faculties which God hath given us are harmoniously developed, do we attain our highest happiness. And has not woman an equal right to happiness here as well as hereafter? And should she not have equal facilities with him for making an honest living while on this footstool? (Stanton, 1848/1989, p. 61).

In addition, Stanton advocated reform in the private sphere. She attacked gender roles that confined women to the roles of mother and wife and advocated equality in marriage.

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The only happy households we now see are those in which the husband and wife share equally in counsel and government. There can be no true dignity or independence where there is subordination to the absolute will of another, no happiness without freedom (Stanton, 1848/1989, p. 63).

Addressing State Legislatures (1854 and 1861)

As Campbell (1989a) explained, appeals to state legislatures in the mid 1800's were a logical and natural outcome of earlier Suffrage Movement activities, since these powerful men were the only ones capable of changing the laws. Stanton spoke before the New York Legislature in 1854 and the Judiciary Committee in 1860. These speeches reflected Stanton's continual commitment to reform and equality.

Address to the Legislature of New York (1854)

The crucial issue at this time was whether or not women and men were fundamentally different (Campbell, 1989a, p. 87). Stanton continued to advocate reform on the basis that men and women were equal. Stanton insisted in 1854 that, "We are moral, virtuous and intelligent, and in all respects quite equal to the proud white man himself..." (p. 147). Furthermore, she explained that "the rights of every human being are the same and identical" (p. 164).

Since women were equal to men, Stanton argued that the laws should be changed to insure equality. Stanton demanded "the redress of our grievances--a revision of your state constitution--a new code of laws" (Stanton, 1854/1989, p. 146). First of all, Stanton called for the right to vote as a right guaranteed to all citizens. Furthermore, Stanton ordered a revision in marriage and divorce laws since the legal system of the 1800's, based on English common law, denied a woman's existence.

Speech to the New York Judiciary Committee (1860)

Stanton's address of 1860 reinforced a feminist philosophy. Stanton advocated legal reform to ensure equality of opportunity.

There are certain natural rights inalienable to civilization as are the rights of air and motion to the savage in the wilderness. The natural rights of the civilized man and woman are government, property, the harmonious development of all their powers, and the gratification of their desires (Stanton, 1860/ 1989, p. 168).

Once again, Stanton advocated a revision in marriage laws. Through analogy Stanton argued that married women had less rights than slaves. Like a slave, a married women had no name: "She is Mrs. Richard Roe or Mrs. John Doe, just

whose Mrs. she may chance to be" (Stanton, 1860/1989, p. 172).

Married women could not own property, buy or sell, make contracts, or obtain custody of their children after a divorce. Stanton summarized the marriage laws of the 1860's in one concise sentence: "the husband and wife are one, and learned commentators have decided that one is the husband" (p. 173).

The most noteworthy section of the speech, for current purposes, provided the audience with a clear definition of sexual discrimination:

The prejudice against color, of which we hear so much, is no stronger than that against sex. It is produced by the same cause, and manifested very much in the same way. The negro's [sic] skin and the woman's sex are both prima facie evidence that they were intended to be in subjection to the white Saxon man ... it is evident that the prejudice against sex is more deeply rooted and unreasonably maintained than that against color (pp. 173-174).

Stanton insisted that sexual prejudice effected all aspects of a woman's life. Woman was valued "simply as an object of sight, never to rise one foot above the dust from which she sprung" (p. 185). Women were worshiped and adored as beings of beauty, grace, delicacy, and refinement, but these images

prevented women from being noble, virtuous, and independent. Like an artist sculpting a statue, "man has carved out his ideal, and has made a woman that from his low stand-point looks fair and beautiful, a being without hopes or rights ..." (p. 185).

Stanton concluded the speech by creating a vivid, dramatic picture of the future. Through legal reform, Stanton believed that women could become independent and self-supporting. The "masculine" woman would be brave, courageous, and self-reliant (p. 186).

Addressing marriage and divorce laws (1860 and 1861).

In 1860 and 1861, Stanton dedicated two speeches to the controversial topic of divorce. In both speeches Stanton attacked marriage and divorce laws because they put women in an inferior position. Similar to the Seneca Falls Convention, the Debate of 1860 began with Stanton's presentation of resolutions, in this case ten, rather than twelve. In fact, the second resolution at the Convention of 1860 echoed the sentiments of 1848: "Resolved, That all men are created equal, and all women, in their natural rights, are the equals of men; and endowed by their Creator with the same inalienable right of the pursuit of happiness (Stanton, 1860/1989, p. 189).

Stanton argued that women, as individuals, were guaranteed the inalienable right to be happy. The system of

laws prevented a woman's happiness. Upon marrying, Stanton said that "the woman is regarded and spoken of simply as the toy of man--made for his special use--to meet his most gross and sensuous desires (Stanton, 1860/1989, p. 201).

In the following passage Stanton recounted the inequities women faced upon marrying:

In the best condition of marriage, as we now have it, to woman comes all the penalties and sacrifices. A man, in all the full tide of business or pleasure, can marry and not change his life one iota; he can be husband, father, and everything beside: but in marriage woman gives up all ... (Stanton, 1860/1989, p. 196).

Before the Judiciary Committee in 1861, Stanton repeated this theme of inequality.

The contract of marriage is by no means equal ... In entering this compact, the man gives up nothing that he before possessed: he is a man still, while the legal existence of woman is suspended during marriage, and she is known but in and through her husband. She is nameless, powerless, childless (Stanton, 1861/1989, pp. 236-237).

Stanton's ultimate goal was " a contract made by equal parties to live an equal life, with equal restraints and privileges on either side" (Stanton, 1860/1989, p. 201).

Final Speech at the National American
Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)

"Solitude of Self" (1892)

In 1892, at age 76, Stanton was still advocating liberal feminist ideals in her noteworthy "Solitude of Self" address. Throughout this "rhetorical masterpiece," Stanton advocated complete education, property rights, and political equality for women (Campbell, 1989b, p. 371). Women, she said, should be given all of these opportunities as individual rights guaranteed to all citizens.

Stanton again celebrated the natural right of all women to obtain an education.

The education that will fit her to discharge the duties in the largest sphere of human usefulness will best fit her for whatever special work she may be compelled to do ... The strongest reason for giving woman all the opportunities for higher education, for the full development of her faculties ... is the solitude and personal responsibilities of her own individual life ... (Stanton, 1892/1989, p. 373).

Later in the speech, Stanton argued that "An uneducated women trained to dependence, with not resources in herself, must make a failure of any position in life" (p. 378).

Stanton recognized the sexual discrimination women faced in the educational realm. She claimed that only

through extreme reform could women be trained to self-dependence, self-protection, and self-support.

Stanton's final speech encompassed the same ideals she had advocated for forty-four years. Stanton demanded drastic reform of laws and attitudes. Accordingly, women needed to be:

recognized as individuals, responsible for their own environment, thoroughly educated for all positions in life they may be called to fill ... and stimulated to self-support by a knowledge of the business world and the pleasure that pecuniary independence must ever give ... (p. 381).

Stanton still demanded that women be given the right to an equal place in society as men. Women, she said, should have the opportunity to rise in society as far as their talents could take them, unhindered by law or custom. In this speech Stanton summarized the core of her philosophy and her four decades of work:

... nothing adds such dignity to character as the recognition of one's self-sovereignty; the right to an equal place everywhere conceded; a place earned by personal merit, not an artificial attainment by inheritance, wealth, family and position. Seeing then, that the responsibilities of life rest equally on man and woman, that their destiny is the

same, they need the same preparation for time and eternity. (Stanton, 1892/1989 p. 380).

Stanton's numerous speeches on suffrage, which spanned six decades, clearly supported a liberal feminist philosophy. Throughout these speeches Stanton advocated legal reform to ensure equal opportunity and sexual equality for women.

Audience Adaption

These speeches demonstrated Stanton's skills at audience adaption. The suffrage speeches were adapted to men and women in powerful positions. For example, Stanton's numerous speeches to state legislatures were delivered to influential male leaders. The women Stanton spoke to at women's rights conventions were also powerful as a result of wealth and status. Because of the sophistication of these audiences, Stanton adapted specific rhetorical strategies that stressed rationality. Throughout these speeches, Stanton relied heavily on deductive arguments based on legal evidence and authority. Furthermore, Stanton supported her claims with natural rights principles and detailed refutation (Campbell, in press, pp. 176-177).

Stanton spent the majority of her life speaking before such powerful members of society, hoping to incite legal reform. But for eight months of the year, between 1869 and 1882, Stanton lectured on the lyceum circuit. She delivered

her lectures through the lyceum in order to spread her message to a wider, more diverse audience. Because of the different audience, Stanton offered common sense advice, instead of complicated logical arguments, thus showing her skills at audience adaption (Campbell, in press).

Chapter four examines the most popular lecture, "Our Girls," which was delivered in 1872. This chapter focuses on the contemporary appeal and enduring principles articulated in this speech.

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CHAPTER 4

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF "OUR GIRLS"

Historical Analysis

Lyceum Audience

After the Civil War, the lyceum circuit emerged, attracting large audiences and esteemed speakers. In 1869 Stanton joined this circuit and drew a large following for thirteen years.

Although Stanton delivered a variety of speeches, she considered "Our Girls" to be her most favorite (Griffith, 1984). This lecture not only expressed concerns dear to her, but also demonstrated Stanton's skill and popularity as a public speaker. In a letter to her daughter Stanton wrote, "You would laugh to see how everywhere the girls flock round me for a kiss, a curl, an autograph" (Campbell, in press, p. 183).

Stanton enjoyed being a part of the lyceum circuit because it gave her the opportunity to bring her message to a wider audience. This lecture is evidence of Stanton's unique skills at audience adaption. Since the audience consisted mostly of women, Stanton was able to talk about the issue of femininity in more depth. Previously, Stanton had only touched upon these crucial issues. This time Stanton was able to target her message to ordinary non-elite girls and women. This audience differed greatly from her

speeches on suffrage which were tailored specifically to powerful men and elite women.

Throughout "Our Girls" Stanton directly addressed the "coming girl." She adopted the role of a concerned guardian or mother and showed deep affection for the young women in her audience. For example, she frequently addressed the audience members affectionately with phrases like "our young girls" and "our noblest girls" (pp. 142-143). In a later passage she directly addressed her audience as "dear girls" before offering them advice.

Unlike Stanton's previous speeches which were delivered to a highly sophisticated group, this lecture was adapted to the next generation of young girls and women. Because of this, Stanton adopted specific rhetorical strategies. Stanton's purpose and arguments reflected her skills at audience adaption.

Purpose

Stanton's purpose in "Our Girls" (1872) was unique in comparison to her suffrage and reform speeches. In this lecture Stanton tackled an area that she refused to discuss earlier. In 1848 Stanton said, "No, we shall not molest you in your philosophical experiments with socks, pants, high-heeled boots and Russian belts" (Stanton, 1848/1989, p. 53). But in 1872, speaking before young women and girls, Stanton

addressed these crucial concerns which were symbolic of an equally important issue--femininity.

Stanton's purpose in "Our Girls" diverged greatly from the theme of legal and constitutional reform that were characteristic of her earlier speeches. In this lyceum lecture Stanton attempted to redefine femininity by examining current standards of beauty and fashion. She demanded that women mold themselves "into a grand and glorious womanhood" (p. 146). Throughout the lecture Stanton encouraged her audience to accept a new image of feminine attractiveness. She hoped to encourage a new generation of women--what she called the "coming girl"--to become independent, healthy, individuals, rather than artificial, man-made creations.

According to Stanton, a woman could not achieve "the true dignity and glory of womanhood" unless she became healthy, self-reliant, brave, and responsible. The "coming girl" was not "a helpless victim of fashion, superstition, and absurd conventionalism" (p. 144). Stanton refuted traditional beliefs that an independent, self-reliant woman was "unsexed" and unappealing to men (p. 145). In fact, she argued that men actually were more devoted to independent women.

Stanton believed that it was a woman's duty to develop her God-given talents and intellect, above all else. The

roles of wife, mother, and housekeeper were secondary to "the greater fact of womanhood" (p. 146). As Stanton said, "You may never be wives or mothers or housekeepers, but you will always be women, therefore labor for the grander and more universal fact of your existence" (p. 146). Since a woman might never fulfill these "incidental relations" of life, Stanton argued that a woman should concentrate on her individual happiness, "making self-development and self-support ... the end of her being" (p. 146). Stanton observed that many of the conventions of the time prevented women from becoming self-sufficient and independent. For example, standards of female attractiveness required women to spend too much of their time worrying about their physical appearance. Furthermore, women spent valuable resources on useless balms, cosmetics, and hair dyes.

Stanton argued that physical health was the foundation for intellectual development and independence. But, the standards of beauty and fashion of the 1800's became crucial obstacles to attaining these goals. In fact, the customs and traditions of the time created unhealthy and unhappy women.

Stanton compared the households of this time period to "gloomy hospitals" where women incessantly complained of "headaches, earaches, sideaches, and backaches" (p. 147). The fashion standards caused these ailments as women were

forced to wear tight corsets, long dresses, and uncomfortable shoes. These harmful habits prevented natural circulation, paralyzed the nerves and muscles, and prevented exercise. These constraints caused women to appear "moody listless, and weary," lacking "vigor and enthusiasm" (p. 148).

Stanton attacked these fashion customs as unnatural. According to Stanton, these unhealthy habits violated Gods law and caused weakness, deformity, and disease.

Stanton not only noted the health hazards of beauty practices, but also challenged their authenticity. Stanton defined the traditional conceptions of female beauty as a man-made, artificial image. According to Stanton, women were socialized only to please men. The fashions of this era, she said, were created by "French courtesans, whose life work it is to fascinate man and hold him for their selfish purposes." She argued that women were conditioned to amuse "man by an endless variety in her costume" (p. 145). Stanton said that men were satisfied with women who thus supplied them with "vanity and vacuity" (p. 145).

Stanton described the physical and psychological problems related to these female standards of beauty in vivid detail:

Woman, as she is today, is man's handiwork. With iron shoes, steel-ribbed corsets, hoops, trains,

high heels, chignons, panniers, limping gait, feeble muscles, with her cultivated fears of everything seen and unseen of snakes, spiders, mice and millers, cows, caterpillars, dogs, and drunken men, firecrackers and cannon, thunder and lightening, ghosts and gentlemen women die ten thousand deaths, when if educated to be brave and self-dependent, they would die but one (p. 145).

Stanton urged girls to reject these traditions. For example, she encouraged girls to wear loose, comfortable clothes and to exercise regularly. These arguments are amazingly similar, not only to contemporary arguments, but to those of Wollstonecraft in 1792. Wollstonecraft believed that fashion standards and a lack of exercise adversely effected a woman's health. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft argued that women spent too much time on physical beauty (some "corporeal accomplishment"), rather than intellectual improvement. This was echoed in Stanton's words, when she said that women placed too much emphasis on the "physical powers" of beauty and manners.

Even so, Stanton realized that all girls desired to be beautiful. But, she attempted to redefine beauty and create a new image of femininity for the "coming girl."

Remember that beauty works from within, it cannot

be put on and off like a garment, and it depends more on the culture of the intellect, the tastes, sentiments, and affections of the soul ... than the color of the hair, eyes or complexion (p. 151).

A truly beautiful woman, she said, was intelligent, self-reliant, kind, generous, noble, and healthy. A woman could not achieve true beauty by using useless and harmful concoctions. Furthermore, women could not hide their faults with cosmetics. The true enemies to female beauty-- "idleness, frivolity, ill nature, discontent, envy, jealousy, hatred, backbiting, and malice"--could not be concealed by external creams and balms (p. 152). A genuinely beautiful woman exercised regularly and ate nutritious food. She achieved inner beauty by becoming educated and self-reliant.

In summary, Stanton's purpose was to persuade her audience to accept a new image of femininity and womanhood. To achieve this image, Stanton advocated numerous reforms. Most importantly, a woman needed to attain physical health. As she explained, good health "is the foundation of success in every undertaking" (p. 147).

Stanton's arguments concerning health reform can be divided into two areas: physical and psychological. To achieve physical health women needed to make major changes

in fashion. For example, Stanton encouraged women to wear loose fitting clothing and practical shoes. In addition to fashion reform, Stanton encouraged women to discontinue using injurious and useless cosmetics. Finally, Stanton encouraged women to exercise and eat nutritious foods to maintain physical health.

Stanton considered psychological health to be equally important to physical health. Within these arguments Stanton attempted to redefine beauty. She argued that true beauty began from within the individual. A genuinely beautiful woman was educated to self-sufficiency. Within these arguments Stanton advocated reform in all public spheres, including the educational and occupational realms. These arguments differed greatly from Stanton's suffrage speeches. Instead of advocating constitutional and legal revisions, Stanton challenged her audience to reconceptualize their traditional images of womanhood. Stanton's thesis was clear and straightforward:

The coming girl is to be healthy, wealthy, and wise. She is to hold an equal place with her brother in the world of work, in the colleges, in the state, the church and the home. Her sphere is to be no longer bounded by the prejudices of a dead past, but by her capacity to go wherever she can stand. The coming girl

is to be an independent, self-supporting being,
not as today a helpless victim of fashion,
superstition, and absurd conventionalism (p. 144).

In this passage Stanton created a new image of the "coming girl" and refuted traditional definitions of womanhood. Stanton encouraged the next generation of women to accept this image.

Rhetorical Strategies

Stanton utilized rhetorical strategies that were adapted specifically to an audience of young girls. This speech demonstrated Stanton's skills at audience adaption. Stanton's use of language, appeals, argument, and evidence supported her new image of female beauty and womanhood.

Throughout her lecture, Stanton's arguments incorporated practical, common sense advice intended to influence the next generation of women. For example, Stanton showed the impracticality of raising young girls only to become wives. Stanton urged women to strive for more than the title of "daughter, wife, or mother of General, Honorable, or Judge So-and-so, to shine in their reflected light, to wear their deeds and words of valor and of eloquence as their bracelet, necklace, or coronal" (p. 143).

Stanton relied heavily on examples, incorporated with fear appeals, to support her claims. This strategy was

effective, considering the unsophisticated audience Stanton was addressing. Stanton vividly described the hardships women could face if they were socialized only to be wives and mothers. Young girls and women could relate to these formidable stories. Through visual imagery Stanton argued that women became victims who were consumed by "domestic discontent and disgust" (p. 143). Stanton created images of poor, homeless, helpless women who lacked the skills needed for survival. Stanton's negative and frightening portrayal of hardship and suffering reinforced her arguments. As she explained:

Fathers, Brothers, Husbands die, banks fail,
houses are consumed with fire, friends prove
treacherous, creditors grasping and debtors
dishonest, the skills and cunning of a girl's own
brains, and hands are the only friends that are
ever with her, the only sure means of protection
and support (p. 144).

One of Stanton's goals was to encourage women to become financially independent. Only through pecuniary independence could a woman avoid the pitfalls of financial ruin. Throughout this lecture Stanton reiterated a theme of misfortune and hardship that could be avoided if women were educated to become independent. Once again, Stanton's use of fear appeals intended to encourage women to change

their traditional conceptions of womanhood. Women could identify with these frightening stories and apply them to their own lives.

In addition to the use of strong fear appeals, Stanton incorporated colorful, vivid imagery to illustrate her points. She contrasted strings of positive adjectives with negative outcomes. For example, young girls who had not yet felt the harmful effects of socialization were "dashing, noisy, happy, healthy" (p. 141). Women, on the other hand, soon realized their plight in life and became a "subject, degraded ostracized class" (p. 141). In a related passage Stanton contrasted a young girl, who is "healthy, happy, romping" with a mature woman who is "moody, listless, weary" (pp. 147-148). Throughout her lecture Stanton used antithesis to support her arguments.

Stanton's use of imagery contributed greatly to the strength of her arguments as her audience could identify with the visual stories she narrated. Throughout the lecture she created a vivid picture of a misogynist society filled with double standards. These images were embedded with enthymemes. After hearing in explicit detail about societal double standards, the audience could infer that reform was needed.

For example, Stanton enumerated the many spheres of public life where women were barred from entering. Women

were discouraged from studying science, literature, and art and denied access to work, trade and professions (pp. 142-143). Because of this, Stanton argued that women were degraded. In her words, "boys learn their first lessons of contempt for all womankind. They naturally infer that they are endowed with some superior powers to match their superior privileges" (p. 142).

Stanton showed how fashion and beauty standards were used to hold women back, further promoting a society where women were degraded. These double standards were physically harmful to women and Stanton attacked them:

Now I think a woman has good a right as a man has to grow old and have freckles and tan and sunburn if she chooses. When it is only through age that one gathers wisdom and experience, why this endless struggle to seem young? (p. 151).

"Our Girls" demonstrated Stanton's unparalleled skills as a rhetorician. This lecture showed Stanton's ability to vary her rhetorical strategies according to the specific audience. Stanton crafted well-reasoned arguments adapted to an unsophisticated group of women. She offered the "coming girl" common sense, practical advice supported by metaphors, analogies, illustrations, and examples. Stanton created dramatic, vivid images filled with emotional appeals.

This lecture re-defined an entire set of values and beliefs associated with feminine attractiveness for a particular audience in this setting. Stanton created an entirely new image of womanhood. A truly beautiful woman was physically healthy, intelligent and self-sufficient. Above all else, Stanton urged young girls to reach their full potential, unhindered by man-made, artificial, archaic customs of the past. In summary, Stanton created an entire ideological framework that affected every aspect of a woman's life. Accordingly, women could be intelligent and self-supporting without fear of losing their femininity.

Enduring Feminist Arguments

"Our Girls" definitely showed Stanton's competence at audience adaption. Stanton's rhetorical skills are demonstrated by analyzing the lecture according to the specific context and audience. This lecture is important in Stanton's rhetorical history, because it shows how a rhetor can tailor a message to a specific audience. Furthermore, the eloquence and beauty of these lectures attracted loyal supporters to the lyceum circuit.

In addition to the historical significance of the lecture, Stanton developed specific arguments regarding femininity and womanhood that have endured for over a century. Stanton addressed crucial societal problems that still plague American women today. The rhetoric of "Our

Girls" still engages women today as effectively as it engaged women in the nineteenth century. Over time, these feminist arguments have gained force and became an important part of liberal feminism.

Early Feminist Arguments of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Stanton was not the first feminist to address issues of femininity and womanhood. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft argued that many feminine traits associated with womanhood created dependent and weak women. She observed that women overemphasized youth and beauty at the expense of reason and intellect. Wollstonecraft also argued that women abused their bodies by a lack of exercise and restraining fashion standards. Wollstonecraft compared women of this era to the "sweet flowers that smile in the walk of man." In the nineteenth century John Stuart Mill also attacked images of women as "an eminently artificial thing" aggravated by societal custom and traditions.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton considered this issue to be of utmost importance. Although she did not concentrate specifically on these issues in most of her suffrage speeches, she was obviously concerned about images of womanhood. For example, in 1848 Stanton argued that women had a natural right to happiness. She believed that the

right to an education was fundamental to a women's happiness and well-being.

In 1860, she asserted that the sexual prejudices of the time period held women back and prevented them from attaining complete happiness. Stanton defined sexual discrimination and argued that it was as detrimental to society as racism and slavery. Stanton believed that sexual prejudice affected all aspects of a woman's life. Women were worshiped and adored for their beauty and manners, instead of for their intellect. Woman became merely a toy of man, designed only to satisfy his gross and sensuous desires. Stanton attacked these artificial images and encouraged women to adopt the "masculine" traits of self-reliance and independence.

In her final speech of 1892, Stanton still encouraged women to strive for self-reliance and independence. She refuted traditional images of womanhood which prevented women from becoming self-reliant and independent. Once again, she glorified and celebrated the natural right of all women to obtain an education. According to Stanton, an uneducated, dependent woman was a failure in all positions in life.

The themes so central to "Our Girls" threads through both Stanton's speeches and other feminists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Issues of femininity

and womanhood continued to be crucial concerns to feminists in the early twentieth century.

Feminist Arguments of the Early Twentieth Century

In 1902 a second generation of suffragists, led by Carrie Chapman Catt, continued to redefine images of womanhood. During this era many of the preeminent feminists, such as Stanton and Anthony, retired from the movement. Like Stanton, Catt recognized that sex prejudice was the greatest obstacle facing women of the twentieth century. Catt's definition of sexual discrimination was very similar to that of Stanton. According to Catt, sex-prejudice was the chief obstacle to a woman's advancement in society. Images of traditional womanhood held women back and prevented them from succeeding in the public realms of life.

Arguments During the Second Wave of Feminism

In the 1960's interest in women's rights was reinvigorated. During this second wave of feminism arguments defining images of womanhood reappeared. In 1963 Betty Friedan attacked stereotypical traits associated with femininity. Women of this era were portrayed as frivolous, childlike, passive and fluffy. These images prevented women from attaining success in the public realms of society. Friedan urged women to stop conforming to these conventional pictures of femininity.

In 1988 Caroline Bird, like Stanton and Catt, attacked sexual prejudices that prevented women from succeeding in the work force. She showed how these stereotypes destroyed valuable talents of women.

Similar to Wollstonecraft, Bird showed the problems created by socializing boys and girls differently. Girls were valued as "clean, neat, tender little charmers," while boys were valued for their physical competence. This image of femininity, created in early childhood, continued to effect women negatively throughout life. For example, women often became less assertive than men. In the end, men were the ones who were expected to become successful by societal standards.

Gloria Steinem wrote dozens of articles during the second wave of feminism. Many of these articles contained feminist arguments that echoed the ideals of Stanton. For example, Steinem argued that women were human beings first, above all else. In Stanton's words, the incidental roles of wife and mother were subordinate to the greater fact of womanhood. She argued that womanhood was the grand and universal fact of existence.

Steinem explained that a women could not attain autonomy and personal fulfillment unless she obtained a job. Steinem argued that work was one of life's basic pleasures. This position is very similar to what Stanton said in "Our

Girls." Stanton encouraged every girl to "be something in and of herself, have an individual aim and purpose in life" (p. 142). She attacked the artificial barriers of law and custom that prevented women from the public realms of work, trade, and professions. Stanton's ultimate goal was that women become independent and self-supporting.

Contemporary Arguments: The Third Wave of Feminism

Wolf (1991) defined contemporary women's rights activists as Third Wave feminists. Two bestsellers of the 1990's, The Beauty Myth and Backlash, demonstrate how Stanton's arguments concerning femininity and womanhood have endured for over one hundred years and remained as forces in the third wave. Both of these books support the same ideological concerns that Stanton addressed throughout her speaking career and most specifically in her 1872 lecture, "Our Girls." All three works explained how images of feminine beauty hold women back and prevent them from attaining success.

Wolf (1991) defined the beauty myth as a "violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement" (p. 10). Wolf recognized that these images of femininity have been an obstacle to women's success for over one hundred years: "We know that ideals of femininity have sought to control women before: The suffragists of the nineteenth century were

faced with the glamorized invalid ... The beauty myth's backlash image of women does not suddenly appear" (p. 3).

Later in her book, Wolf more thoroughly explained the historical significance of the beauty myth:

Every generation since about 1830 has had to fight its version of the beauty myth. "It is very little to me," said suffragist Lucy Stone in 1855, "to have the right to vote, to own property, etcetera, if I may not keep my body and its uses, in my absolute right." Eighty years later, after women had won the vote, and the first wave of the organized women's movement subsided, Virginia Wolf wrote that it would still be decades before women could tell the truth about their bodies (pp. 11-12).

Wolf explained the seriousness of this issue: A backlash against women's advancement does not originate in a smoke-filled room; it is often unconscious and reflexive, like racism. A backlash against feminism that uses an ideology about beauty to keep women down is not an organized conspiracy with maps and pins, but a generalized atmosphere in which man's fears and women's guilt are addressed and elaborated and its messages to women about the relationship between their value and their bodies (p. 3).

Similar to Stanton, Wolf made explicit comparisons between sexual discrimination and racism. Furthermore, Wolf, like Stanton, realized that women desired to be beautiful. Both women did not attempt to change this, but only condemned images of femininity that undermined women psychologically and politically. Wolf actually wrote her book as a tribute to women's beauty and power (p. 5).

Throughout her book, Wolf's (1991) words echoed those of Stanton. Both women recognized that negative images of female beauty became political issues. They realized that concerns of physical appearance, bodies, faces, hair, and clothes were not frivolous issues. Instead, the beauty myth created an ideology that controlled women. They both argued that historical definitions of beauty have worked against women. According to this theory, an overconcern with beauty "became the new cultural censors of women's intellectual space" (Wolf, 1991, p. 11).

Wolf and Stanton argued that these concerns were actually about men's institutional power. Both works show how images of femininity expend female energy and intelligence and prescribe particular behaviors that degrade women and empower men. Like Stanton, Wolf concluded that women needed to redefine beauty:

The contemporary ravages of the beauty backlash are destroying women physically and depleting us

psychologically. If we are to free ourselves from the dead weight that has once again been made out of femaleness, it is not ballots or lobbyists or placards that women need first; it is a new way to see (Wolf, 1991, p. 19).

Faludi's (1991) book, Backlash, also addressed the concept of womanhood. Faludi explained the recent counterassault in society against women's progress. She described the backlash as "an endless feedback loop that perpetuates and exaggerates its own false images of womanhood" (p. xv). Faludi's description of the evolution of the backlash is very similar to Wolf's description of the beauty myth. Both books showed how societal standards hold women back from succeeding in the public realms of life.

The backlash is not a conspiracy, with a council dispatching agents from some central control room, nor are the people who serve its ends often aware of their role; ... For the most part, its workings are encoded and internalized, diffuse and chameleon-like ... taken as a whole, however, these codes and cajoling, these whispers and threats and myths, move overwhelmingly in one direction: they try to push women back into their "acceptable" roles (Faludi, 1991, p. xxii).

Faludi argued that the fashion and beauty backlashes perpetuated the inequality that women experienced. These arguments echoed the words of Stanton and Wolf. Throughout these passages, Faludi compared contemporary fashion and beauty standards to those of the Victorian era. Faludi's comparison to the Victorian era--the time period of Stanton--shows the enduring significance of Stanton's arguments.

Like Stanton, Faludi attacked the fashion habits that encouraged women to wear "body-squeezing garments that reduced the waist by three inches" (p. 170). Faludi showed how the fashion industry labeled restrictive clothing as the essence of femininity. In reality, Faludi argued that these tight-laced corsets celebrated women's repression, not female sexuality.

Furthermore, Faludi reaffirmed that these fashion standards were created for the pleasures of men. Stanton had made these same claims in 1872 when she said that women were the handiwork of men. Stanton had attacked the fashion of this era as creating fascination and amusement for men.

Faludi's (1991) arguments against the male-created beauty standards reiterated those of Stanton. Faludi attacked images of femininity that were "grossly unnatural and achieved with increasingly harsh, unhealthy, and punitive measures" (p. 201). She explained how the portrayal of a feminine appearance aggravated a woman's

self-esteem and caused high anxiety. She admonished the beauty industry as destroying female bodies and minds, causing obedience and restraints.

Faludi (1991) summarized the problem succinctly: "The beautiful backlash woman is controlled on both senses of the word. Her physique has been domesticated, her appearance tamed and manicured as the grounds of a gentleman's estate" (p. 204).

As noted, these arguments were articulated by Stanton over a century ago. In Stanton's words, women were violating natural law and causing their own weakness and deformity. She insisted that it was not "in harmony with God's laws that any woman should move up and down the earth with her ribs lapped" (p. 148).

Finally, both Faludi (1991) and Stanton (1872) attacked societal emphasis on youth. Both women recognized that women were in a constant battle to appear young. In Faludi's words, the beauty industry was "exploiting universal fears of mortality ... exploiting it in women only, of course" (p. 209). These "fear-inducing messages" preyed on the ancient cultural fears of the older woman (p. 209). One hundred years previously, Stanton had posed the question, "why this endless struggle to seem young?" (p. 151).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was two-fold. First of all, Stanton's rhetoric was examined through a historical analysis. This process showed Stanton's skills at audience adaption. The rhetorical strategies she chose were adapted to the specific context and audience. Stanton's use of language, appeals, argument, and evidence demonstrated her skills as a public speaker.

Equally important was Stanton's contribution to feminist rhetoric. Through audience adaption, Stanton was able to address the crucial concerns of femininity and womanhood. These concerns of 1872 have continued to be concerns for modern day feminists. The substantive and stylistic features of Stanton's rhetoric have transcended her time period and continue to speak to women of the 1990's. This lecture not only shows Stanton's skills as a rhetorician but, proves that she was a woman a century ahead of her time.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS: SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

For centuries women's speech has been stifled, ignored, and belittled. When women attempted to enter the male-dominated realm of public speaking, they experienced tremendous obstacles, including ridicule and violence. Early women's rights activists like Maria Miller Stewart, Angelina Grimke, and Lucy Stone often faced mob-like, hostile audiences who attempted to intimidate them from speaking in public. Because of this hostile environment, many of these speeches were destroyed and will never be analyzed. Unfortunately, the accomplishments of many early feminists will never be fully appreciated.

In addition to these historical barriers to feminist rhetoric, the attitude of many contemporary scholars is distressing. Modern anthologies of great speeches continue to emphasize male standards of excellence and rarely mention female speakers. An entire movement in our nation's history, which spanned over seventy years, is often ignored in these works. The Suffrage Movement's greatest female speakers rarely receive more than a footnote of recognition in our history books.

Despite these findings, a few writers have encouraged the study of female speakers. For example, Kennedy and O'Shield's (1983) anthology, We Shall Be Heard, is devoted

exclusively to the examination of early feminist rhetoric. Campbell's (1989) two volume work, Man Cannot Speak for Her, examines 26 key speeches of the Suffrage Movement. Campbell's latest work, Women Public Speakers in the United States (in press) illustrates a sincere commitment to the rhetoric of influential women.

Furthermore, many universities now offer communication courses dedicated solely to the examination of female speakers. These classes encourage students to analyze speeches that are otherwise ignored in general communication classes. Even so, much needs to be done in order to combat the lack of support for feminist rhetoric. This thesis was intended to contribute to this emerging body of research.

This paper also addresses another problem related to the study of rhetorical artifacts: the standards by which critics determine effectiveness. In the past, speakers have been judged as effective according to their ability to influence change. By using this standard of judgment, many female speakers have been ignored. For example, many critics only examine speeches delivered before powerful leaders. Of course, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these leaders were predominately all males. Many times speeches are only judged as effective if they are delivered in public settings.

Critics should be encouraged to examine speeches delivered in a variety of settings to a variety of audiences. Stanton's lyceum lecture serves as an example. This speech was not delivered to a powerful, influential audience. But, the significance of Stanton's arguments and their enduring quality certainly merited further study.

This work also addresses the enduring quality of crucial issues that should be of concern to all women. Stanton's concerns of 1872 still are problems in our society. As we approach the twenty-first century, it's distressing to realize that contemporary women are still struggling to attain idealized images of youth and beauty just as in Stanton's day. Women of Stanton's generation were forced to wear steel corsets, iron shoes, and long dresses that were physically harmful. They were persuaded to buy useless and dangerous cosmetics that promised a youthful appearance.

Stanton realized that these prescriptions for beauty were actually prescriptions for behavior. Women were expected to act a certain way in order to appear "feminine." Women of this era were also in a constant, uphill battle to appear young. In the 1870's these standards created unhealthy, dependent, helpless women.

Unfortunately, women of the 1990's still must combat idealized images of beauty similar to those that plagued

women of Stanton's time period in the 1870's. Although steel-ribbed corsets may be a ritual of the past, contemporary women are equally restrained by unrealistic images of thinness. Furthermore, the quest for a youthful appearance has resurged in this century. Contemporary advertisements promise to erase years from the complexion, similar to the advertisements for Hagan's Magnolia Balm in Stanton's generation.

Stanton's condemnation of these rituals only shows how deeply rooted these customs are in our culture. Perhaps the Third Wave of feminists can combat this problem that Stanton was so concerned about 120 years ago.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's contributions to public speaking influenced major events in our country's history. Stanton's rhetoric launched a social movement that extended for over 70 years. More time needs to be spent analyzing her works and other less prominent suffragists such as Angelina Grimke, Lucy Stone, and Carrie Chapman Catt. These women dedicated their lives to public speaking and women's rights. These speeches demonstrate a sincere commitment to a liberal feminist ideology. The examination of these speeches shows how much has changed, and how much still

needs to be done. Hopefully, one day women will no longer be bound by artificial barriers of custom and every woman will "be something in and of herself, have an individual aim and purpose in life" (Stanton, 1872).

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