

University of Denver

Digital Commons @ DU

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

1-1-2009

Remembering Liberal Feminism in Radical Ways: Locating Conservative Strategies in the Narratives of Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers, Tammy Bruce, and Dr. Laura Schlessinger

Jenni Marie Simon
University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd>



Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Simon, Jenni Marie, "Remembering Liberal Feminism in Radical Ways: Locating Conservative Strategies in the Narratives of Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers, Tammy Bruce, and Dr. Laura Schlessinger" (2009). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 929.
<https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/929>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, dig-commons@du.edu.

REMEMBERING LIBERAL FEMINISM IN RADICAL WAYS: LOCATING
CONSERVATIVE STRATEGIES IN THE NARRATIVES OF DR. CHRISTINA HOFF
SOMMERS, TAMMY BRUCE, AND DR. LAURA SCHLESSINGER

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jenni M. Simon

November 2009

Advisor: Dr. Christina Foust

Author: Jenni M. Simon

Title: REMEMBERING LIBERAL FEMINISM IN RADICAL WAYS: LOCATING CONSERVATIVE STRATEGIES IN THE NARRATIVES OF DR. CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS, TAMMY BRUCE, AND DR. LAURA SCHLESSINGER

Advisor: Dr. Christina R. Foust

Degree Date: November, 2009

ABSTRACT

This dissertation identifies and challenges post-feminist narratives that remember the second wave or 1960s and 1970s liberal feminism as a radical form of activism. The narratives of three prominent post-feminist authors: Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers, Tammy Bruce and Dr. Laura Schlessinger are used as examples of how identification works as a rhetorical device that motivates individual actors to join in a struggle against liberal and radical feminist ideologies. I argue that each author draws on classically liberal and politically conservative virtues to define a “true” feminism that is at odds with alternative feminist commitments. I demonstrate how these authors create a subject position of a “true feminist” that is reminiscent of the classically liberal suffragist. In Burkean terms, each author constitutes the suffragist as a friend and juxtaposes her with the enemy—modern liberal and radical feminists. I articulate the consequences of such dialectical portrayals of feminist activism and further suggest that these authors’ visions of feminism reinforce patriarchal practices, urging women to assimilate into a classically liberal society at the cost of social justice. In opposition to their memories of feminism, I offer a radical democratic approach of remembering feminism that is less concerned with the definition of feminism or feminist than it is with holistically addressing oppression and what oppression *means* to subjugated populations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Christina Foust for her dedication to this project and the insight she has provided throughout its various stages. She has been an inspiration in her teaching, advising, and scholarship and I am fortunate to have her as an advisor. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my committee: Dr. Dan Lair, Dr. Kate Willink and Dr. Ann Dobyns. I appreciate their willingness to participate and their guidance. I would like to thank Dr. Richard Lee, whose untimely passing precludes him from reading this work, but rest assured, this dissertation, and my career would never have occurred without his careful mentoring. Finally, I would like to thank my family: My parents who serve as extraordinary role models, my sister, without whom I would have been very lonely trudging home from school in the South Dakota winters, and finally Daniel Simon. Danny, you are a pal and partner in every sense. I can never adequately thank you for your support, love and consistency throughout our lives and my education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One	1
Collective Memory and Cultural Narratives.....	13
Liberal Feminism from its Classically Liberal Conceptions to its “Radical” Turn.....	17
Introducing Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers, Tammy Bruce, and “Dr. Laura” Schlessinger	20
Chapter Two	26
A Framework of Feminism: The Movement and Hoff Sommers’ Backlash.....	29
Classically Liberal Thought as Ideology	42
Solidifying a Subjectivity: Reconstituting the Suffragist as the Modern Day Feminist.....	55
Drawing Conclusions: Implications of Equity Feminism.....	62
Chapter Three	67
Classically Liberal Thought and the New American Individual	71
NOW, Liberal Feminism, and the Authentic Feminist.....	92
Conclusions and Implications.....	102
Chapter Four	110
The Cult of True Womanhood: Constructing Identity with the Archetypal “True Woman”	114
Classically Liberal Thought and True Womanhood.....	128
Collective Memory: Home, Family, and Feminism	142
Drawing Conclusions: Collective Memory and Social Movements.....	144
Chapter Five.....	150
Review: Re-membering a Liberal Feminism in a Post-Feminist Context	153
Consequences of Remembering: Foreclosure and Censure.....	164
Conclusion	171
Bibliography	175

Chapter One

Introduction

Feminist scholars have taken up the task of unpacking “why feminism remains marginalized and why power imbalances between men and women remain intractable.”¹ In doing so, we have been implored to expose “virulently antifeminist organizations and campaigns at work in contemporary and political culture.”² At the heart of such challenges is the assumption that within contemporary society, there remains strong opposition to social projects dedicated to gender equality and gender liberation. One method of meeting the challenges posed above is to confront prominent cultural narratives that continue to discipline gender and gender performance.

In this dissertation, I argue that challenges to modern feminism come largely from conservative discourses that remember the liberal feminism of 1960s and 1970s as a radical form of activism. Three classically liberal and conservative political pundits exemplify the use of memories to discredit contemporary feminism, and sustain patriarchy: Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers, Tammy Bruce, and Dr. Laura Schlessinger. I consider their memories of the first wave, and 1960s and 1970s feminism, as a body of rhetoric in the following chapters. These narrative memories participate in a larger cultural narrative that “remembers” and “re-presents” feminism in the modern era,

¹ Bonnie J. Dow and Celeste M. Condit, “State of the Art in Feminist Scholarship,” *Journal of Communication*, 55, (2005): 467.

² Ibid.

revealing the overtly political act of collective remembering—a social process that is both inherently selective and always partial.³

Collective memories shape the social realities of a collectivity and support political attitudes through a partial memory of past events.⁴ Collective memory is an organizing tool that helps a group “make sense” of its history. It provides a means of foreclosing the possibilities for interpreting or understanding the past, and effectively allows a group to discipline social practices in the present. As Morris explains, “public memory is perhaps best conceived as an *amalgam* of the current hegemonic bloc’s cultural memory,” a grouping of partial recollections and interpretations that help to control current social attitudes and beliefs.⁵

This project employs collective memory as an interpretive tool to unpack the manner in which Hoff Sommers’, Bruce’s and Schlessinger’s narratives selectively remember liberal feminist activism. In addition, they not only discipline the movement, but contain it to the past. As this project will ultimately reveal, the authors’ memories define a “true feminism” of the suffrage era, through classically liberal principles of autonomous individuality and self-empowerment. Yet, as I argue, the classically liberal “feminist” values also maintain the material inequalities that exist between women and men in a patriarchal society. Their memories of a classically liberal feminism as a “true

³ Kendall R. Phillips, ed., *Framing Public Memory*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

⁴ Ali Behdad, *A Forgetful Nation: On Immigration and Cultural Identity in the United States*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁵ Richard Morris, *Sinners, Lovers, and Heroes: An Essay on Memorializing in Three American Cultures*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997): 26.

form” of feminist activism also disciplines other feminist positions, particularly second wave (liberal) feminism of the 1960s and 1970s.

I argue that Hoff Sommers’, Bruce’s, and Schlessinger’s narratives constitute a body of rhetoric that uses identification as a tool to move audiences to join in a struggle against modern feminism. Kenneth Burke defines identification as means by which humans build consubstantiality—we are born apart from one another and seek unity through rhetoric.⁶ These authors have a tendency to “seek unity” through dialectical memories of suffrage and modern feminism. They use identification through classically liberal principles (a subject I address more fully throughout the dissertation) to unite their audiences as modern day suffragists engaged in a battle against radical and liberal feminists. At best, their memories render feminism irrelevant in the modern era (a post-feminist position). At worst, feminism is remembered as irresponsible, immoral, and ultimately dangerous to society.

Given that discrimination against women continues to be a problem in the United States, a project that disputes cultural narratives that promote and/or support women’s oppression can lend insight into the cultural underpinnings of oppressive practices. Moreover an analysis of post-feminist narratives allows critics to challenge the taken-for-granted social realities concerning gender and gender discrimination in the United States. Levine describes post-feminism as a discursive practice that “assumes a ‘pastness’ for feminism, arguing that feminism’s purported success in the past allows, even

⁶ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969).

necessitates, that it be superseded in the present.”⁷ She asserts that over the last 30 years, post-feminism has subtly remade feminist discourses through a series of cultural responses to feminism, particularly in popular media where it masquerades as “pro-feminist.”⁸ As post-feminism becomes progressively naturalized, it achieves what Levine terms “a post-feminist hegemony” that fails to question how women negotiate femininity and sexuality in masculine spheres.⁹ As a result, “feminist discourses that seek to change or dismantle patriarchal ones are more often incorporated into them, helping sustain the very structures of dominance they had set out to critique and destroy.”¹⁰

Post-feminism attempts to place power in the hands of individual women; but over the last 30 years, its focus has been on the white, middle class, heterosexual woman.¹¹ Post-feminism’s repudiation of 1960s and 1970s collectivist activism fails to account for “those women unable by social position or circumstance to make the same kinds of choices.”¹² I aim to address the problems posed by post-feminist memories of second wave activism by bringing to the fore the taken-for-granted realities of social interaction that regulate and subjugate minority positions.

In opposition to Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Schlessinger, I conclude that we could benefit from a more dynamic memory of feminism that is less concerned with feminist

⁷ Elena Levine, “Remaking *Charlie’s Angels*: The Construction of Post-Feminist Hegemony,” *Feminist Media Studies*, 8, (2008): 376.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 376.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

identities (e.g., classically liberal feminist, liberal feminist, radical feminist, etc.) and instead remembers the movement more holistically through an examination of culture and human interaction. As such, this project advocates an approach to social movement critique which views social movements as evolving, meaning-based events that are driven and maintained through human consciousness as opposed to functional or rhetorical approaches that single out a movement's patterns of agitation, discourse, or prominent rhetors. Moreover, I advocate a method of critique that assumes the "meanings" created through movement or about movement are always subject to change through cultural interaction and interpretation.¹³ Using collective memory as an interpretive tool, this project discusses the problems associated with a memory of feminism that is based in classically liberal practices. It will further argue that in embracing a meaning-based notion of social movement critique, scholars can reveal richer portrayals of social movement in general, and feminism in particular.

Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Schlessinger have been chosen for this project over other candidates for two reasons. The first is their visibility as both public and political figures, which as McGee and McKerrow suggest, lends credibility and legitimacy to their narratives and provides them the tools necessary to mass-produce their ideas for greater audience consumption.¹⁴ Secondly, their diverse backgrounds and political leanings support the claim that classic liberalism is a cultural phenomenon that spreads across the

¹³ Michael C. McGee, "'Social Movement': Phenomenon or Meaning?" in Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Brown, eds., *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, (1980; repr. State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001): 125–136.

¹⁴ Michael C. McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Communication*, 54, (1990): 274–289; Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs*, 56, (1989): 91–111.

political spectrum. While the authors in this project may (and do) disagree on any number of political positions, their perception of feminism is linked and supported through larger classically liberal ideologies that maintain definitions of gender and gender practices in the United States.

I highlight each author's contribution to a classically liberal or conservative memory of feminism through an analysis of their definitions of "true" feminism. I also point to how feminism is demeaned in these narratives through the authors' partial representations of liberal or second wave feminism, and the accompanying nostalgia for a classically liberal first wave. I have attempted to compile a representative, but manageable sample from all media, drawing from musings posted on the internet, personal manifestos and other published works, as well as radio addresses and interviews. In collecting my artifacts, I have assembled fragments of rhetoric that reveal a conservative, hegemonic use of memory to maintain dominant gender relations by defining feminism in the present.

In this chapter, I provide the necessary framework for understanding how social movement and collective memory intersect in the exploration of feminist narratives. In the first section I advocate a "meaning-based" approach to social movement articulated most notably by Michael Calvin McGee, David Zarefsky, and Robert Cathcart. I then explore the concepts of classic liberalism and liberal feminism to provide a backdrop for unpacking how these philosophies are used in the authors' narratives. In the final section, I provide a brief biography of the authors to expose the nature of their rhetoric and reveal how they situate themselves within a larger memory of feminism. As part of this biography I will also discuss at a general level the selected texts for analysis.

The Quest for a Meaning Based Approach to Social Movement Rhetoric (SMR)

In 1980, and subsequently in 1983, the study of social movement rhetoric in communication came under close scrutiny with the beginning of a scholarly debate playing out on the pages of *The Central States Communication Journal*. This historical debate largely questioned what constitutes social movement and social movement rhetoric. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the debate also paid particular attention to how rhetorical critics should conceptualize, and therefore properly analyze, social movement rhetoric.

Leland Griffin is largely credited with introducing social movement studies to rhetorical criticism with his “historical” approach. Griffin calls the critic to move beyond “biographical” studies of social protest that largely focus on a movement’s speakers or leaders.¹⁵ In his now famous approach of critiquing social movements through their inception, rhetorical crisis, and consummation, Griffin originally encouraged critics to explore the historical context of a movement.¹⁶ He specifically highlighted the need for taking into account the group’s social environment, its goals, and means of agitation as a method of understanding the nature of the movement.

Other scholars followed Griffin’s suit (whether working from this approach or diverging from it) creating methods of analysis that further sought to expose the form and function, or the why and how of social movements. Often termed “functional” and

¹⁵ Leland M. Griffin, “The Rhetoric of Historical Movements,” in Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Brown eds., *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, (1952; repr., State College: PA, Strata Publishing, 2001): 5–10.

¹⁶ Robert Cox and Christina R. Foust, “Social Movement Rhetoric,” in Andrea L. Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa E. Eberly, *The Sage Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008).

“rhetorical,” these methods are characterized by their treatment of social movement. Functional and rhetorical approaches focus on isolating a group’s primary speakers, means of agitation, organizational practices, goals, and overall *modus operandi*. Here, rhetoric is understood as a resource or tool for the social movement.¹⁷ It becomes a means of agitation that is used to overcome conditions which require the group to draw on nontraditional forms of discursive action.¹⁸ The ultimate goal of functional rhetorical studies is to isolate specific social movements and analyze their purposeful use of rhetoric in historical context.

Despite Griffin’s success and almost 20-year dominance over social movement theory in rhetorical studies, his methods came into question, most notably by Simons in 1970.¹⁹ In breaking with Griffin’s approach, Simons offered scholars a “leader-centered” approach that took into account the persuasive and mobilizing efforts of “uninstitutionalized” collectivities.²⁰ For Simons, these uninstitutionalized collectivities worked in opposition to, and for the purpose of, the “reconstitution of social norms and values.”²¹ Simons’ approach suggested that all social movements follow certain rhetorical patterns of agitation. From Simons’ approach, the critic engages in an analysis

¹⁷ Charles J. Stewart, Craig A. Smith, and Robert E. Denton, Jr., *Persuasion and Social Movements*, 2 ed., (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1989).

¹⁸ John W. Bowers and Donovan J. Ochs, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control*, (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1992).

¹⁹ Herbert W. Simons, “Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements” in Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Brown eds., *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, (1970; repr., State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001): 26–34.

²⁰ Simons, “Requirements, Problems, and Strategies,” 3.

²¹ *Ibid*

of a social movement's rhetorical efforts to persuade, mobilize, and thus affect change, by following the leader's speech.

As a result of Simons' addition to social movement critique, rhetorical/historical and functional approaches dominated scholarly inquests into the nature of movements, providing critics with multiple methods of exploring and understanding collective activism. However, all these approaches came under attack in the 1980s by scholars who noted the inability of these approaches to isolate movements as specific phenomena that differ from other forms of social conflict. Zarefsky, for example, argued a functional or rhetorical/historical approach's reliance on structure and function provides the rhetorical critic with few tools to move beyond traditional rhetorical criticism.²² Other critical scholars further contended that while functional and rhetorical/historical approaches assume an inherent political motive as the foundation of all social movements, they reduce such political motivations to a locus around which groups can organize.²³

Functional and historical approaches are agent-centered approaches—they lead the critic to interpret social movements as organizations (uninstitutionalized collectivities) and/or critique the “rhetorical patterns” of the movement's leader (primary agent).²⁴ As a consequence, dissenters argued that agent-centered approaches limit social movements to organizational activities. Many scholars found the agent-centered approach inadequate as social movement rhetoric evades scholarly attempts to isolate and

²² David Zarefsky, “A Skeptical View of Movement Studies,” in Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Brown eds., *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, (1980; repr. State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001): 137–146.

²³ Kevin DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*. (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 1999).

²⁴ Cox and Foust, “Social Movement Rhetoric.”

thoroughly analyze it as a discrete event or collectivity. In refuting functional definitions of movement, McGee explains:

When I survey the history of the concept of “movement,” then, I mean not to suggest that there is an aura of “legitimacy” in earlier characterizations of “movement,” but rather that the history of the concept reveals the pragmatic and ideal pitfalls awaiting those who make ill-advised conceptual choices.²⁵

McGee suggests that functional, rhetorical/historical and agent-centered approaches not only fail to adequately define collectivities and their means of protest, but he also suggests that they fail to recognize the human condition of the individuals who come together as part of purpose driven collectivities.

The 1980 debates over social movement rhetoric established the need to explore social movements beyond agent-centered approaches. While these approaches remain useful for history, social movements themselves do not necessarily have a “unique” rhetorical style or quality, and if they do, that style hasn’t been adequately captured by previous criticism.²⁶ The debates provided a framework for moving beyond a movement’s rhetorical agent, particular mobilizing practices, and methods of agitation as means to understand social movement.

In particular, McGee’s essay, “Social Movement: Phenomenon or Meaning,” critiques traditional theorists for incorrectly interpreting social movement as in phenomenon.²⁷ In reducing social movements to events or collectivities, McGee suggests that these approaches view movements as mere “things,” isolated entities that exist

²⁵ McGee, “Social Movement,” 128.

²⁶ Stephen E. Lucas, “Coming to Terms with Movement Studies,” in Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Brown eds., *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, (1980; repr. State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001): 146–157.

²⁷ McGee, “Social Movements.”

outside the dominant social structure. McGee and Zarefsky agree with Griffin's 1952 argument, in that they view social movements as being embedded in history. However, they argue that previous historical approaches are ironically incapable of adequately understanding the historical contexts of social movements. By focusing on the movement's organizing practices, these approaches fail to recognize the socio-historical processes that influence human behavior. In short, they say "say nothing about the human condition ...and they say nothing at all about the *meaning* of collective life."²⁸

The alternative to historical and functional approaches, for McGee, is to treat movement as *meaning*, a condition driven by human consciousness to organize and challenge dominant political beliefs. In a meaning-based approach, changes in attitudes, values, and beliefs within the dominant social realm are the sites of movement. This is a marked change from traditional approaches that look toward rhetorical agents to understand the nature of social movement. A notion of social movement as meaning assumes a much more fluid relationship between collectivities, social behaviors, and history.²⁹ Here movement moves between the three in a constant ebb and flow, always subject to change and always driven by the political leanings of human actors.

McGee's approach locates movement as it is situated in human communication. McGee notes that movement is "an illusion," and "not a fact."³⁰ He suggests social movement scholarship should be critical, taking into account the underpinnings of power and ideology inherent in any collectivity, whether it be dominant or subordinate. This is a

²⁸ Ibid, 130.

²⁹ Lucas, "Coming to Terms with Movement Studies."

³⁰ McGee, "Social Movement," 132.

break from Simons' "top-down" approach, a position Simons eventually had to concede as inadequate when it became apparent that many social movements proceed not only from the top down, but also from innumerable other directions, both linear and nonlinear.³¹ In contrast to Simons, the critic in McGee's theory is weaving a web of seemingly unrelated social acts to point to social movement. In this case, attention to cultural narratives may help the critic in accomplishing the difficult task of understanding the "human consciousness" of collective life.

In incorporating the notion of the cultural narrative, we can begin to see how "political speech calls up its authority from the depths of the past even as it reaches out for the symbolic charge of contemporary culture."³² The debate between and over agent-centered approaches and a movement-as-meaning approach is crucial in how this project understands social movement. In marrying notions of movement and memory (which I elaborate on conceptually in the following section), a meaning-centered approach to social movement more adequately explains how memories of social movements affect and or alter the meaning of the movement in the present.

McGee's approach permits flexibility in analyzing social movement texts because it looks to symbolic action (in all its rhetorical manifestations), not structural form to locate how collectivities create meaning. Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Schlessinger might be excluded from functional approaches since they are working within dominant discourses (i.e., they are not members of an uninstitutionalized group). However, using a

³¹ Deluca, "Image Politics."

³² John M. Murphy, "Domesticating Dissent: The Kennedys and the Freedom Rides," in Charles E. Morris and Stephen H. Brown, eds., *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, (1994; repr. State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001): 47.

meaning-based approach, I demonstrate how all three authors tend to invoke classically liberal frameworks to reprimand “outrageous” feminist agitation or “militant” feminist leaders. They “remake” a meaning of second wave feminism by critiquing 1960s and 1970s activism through an application of classically liberal memories of “true” feminism.

At the same time, their memories promote a feminism that ironically advocates social movement by reinforcing the values of the dominant bloc. This is an example of collective memory as a social force that serves to both move, and at the same time maintain, social attitudes. I use collective memory to gain a better understanding of how classically liberal and conservative discourses impact current social attitudes concerning feminism and move us to a more classically liberal or post-feminist understanding of feminism.

Collective Memory and Cultural Narratives

Collective memories play upon the cultural norms and ideologies of a collectivity. The empirical data for collective memory scholars is the cultural narrative, a socially significant story embedded with mythical representations that, upon reflection, reveal the social attitudes and beliefs of the group. Knowledge is created through the dynamic interplay between the rhetor and the collectivity where the rhetor’s memories are transferred to members of the group. Critics can explore this dynamic transfer, noting how ideologies are re-established in the retelling of the memory and locate the power structures that stabilize and normalize the practices of dominant groups.

Both memory and movement are fluid social constructions that have the ability to change over time. Kammen states that memory is “a slowly shifting configuration of

traditions.”³³ Griffin suggests that “movement is a term that places a particular construction on historical ideas, persons, and events, fusing them into a dynamic social form.”³⁴ Irwin-Zarecka furthers the relationship between memory and movement, suggesting that memory has the ability to create social change. She states that collective memory “is one of the most important symbolic resources we have for mobilizing action and legitimating it.”³⁵ Collective memories have the power to shape realities of an event, and by implication, change it. They also have a capacity to spur identification between individuals and collectivities, constituting one of the main rhetorical tools of social change.

The use of collective memory studies in this project is crucial in understanding how scholars can bridge the gap between movement as phenomenon and movement as meaning. Collective memory allows the exploration of a social movement from its conception, but also provides room for an analysis that moves far beyond the movement’s structure and its action, allowing the critic to capture the movement’s dynamic qualities. Collective memory also allows the critic to move beyond agent-centered approaches by exploring rhetoric as it functions within a larger cultural narrative to maintain and sustain hegemony. As Biesecker explains, the cultural representations that make up collective memories provide the necessary means for making “one out of many” by laying the

³³ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, (New York, NY: Knopf, 1991).

³⁴ Charles J. Griffin, “Movement as Memory: Significant Form in *Eyes on the Prize*” *Communication Studies*, 54, (2003): 198.

³⁵ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994): 67.

ideological framework for producing a “new ...sensibility.”³⁶ Biesecker posits that memories create a form of *doxa*, or the common sense and practical means for interpreting present conditions. As such, memories have the power not only to re-present past events, but also to move society toward new interpretations of daily life.

The relationships between memory and movement assume a hegemonic struggle between social groups. If a memory is used to mobilize a group, then we must assume that the mobilizing memory is in tension with another. After all, if a rhetor is calling a group to remember something better or something different as means to incite group action, then the group must be opposed to, or at least in tension with a competing memory or social reality. When groups hold opposing memories of an event, as in the case of post-feminists and feminists, they both seek to legitimate their notion of the past to help mobilize constituents.

Mobilization occurs when memories reveal inconsistencies with an opposing reality. For example, where a feminist might find the social movements of the 1960s liberating and a base for future social improvements, post-feminist authors like Dr. Laura Schlessinger remember these social movements as socially destructive and the root of current social problems. The work of memory scholars is to reveal this complex system that remembers and forgets, reifies and reconstitutes, subjugates and empowers, and is in constant flux. In doing so, we uncover how memories come to legitimate arguments for

³⁶ Barbara Biesecker, “Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88, (2002): 395; see also Robert Cox, “Argument and Usable Traditions,” in Frans H. van Eemeren, et. al., eds., *Argumentation: Across the Lines of Discipline*. Dordrecht, Holland: Foris, 1987), 93-99; Robert Cox, *Cultural Memory and Public Moral Argument* [The Van Zelst Lecture in Communication] Evanston: Northwestern University School of Speech, 1987.

social change and movement, and, in some cases, help spur identification and social change themselves.

In this project, collective memory studies provide an opportunity to expose the social effects of remembering 1960s and 1970s feminism (notably, liberal) as “radical” feminist activism. I explore how the authors’ memories highlight prominent feminist rhetors and define them as a feminist elite, in stark contrast to the nostalgic visions of first wave feminism. I demonstrate how the authors retell forms of “radical” feminist agitation to distance their classically liberal audiences from second wave feminism, reinforcing identification with a classically liberal feminism (often captured, by the authors, in memories of suffrage). At stake for these authors is the definition of “true” feminism, and they work hard to establish their definition as *the* definition. I have chosen post-feminist texts that represent how the partial representations of many possible interpretations of feminism come to represent the whole, the “one out of many.”

In my conclusion, I elaborate on how the struggle to fix feminist identifications unnecessarily moves feminists away from addressing oppression. As an alternative, I offer a more meaning based approach to feminist activism, where understanding oppression and what it means to various groups of women becomes the driving force for the movement. From this paradigm, memories of both feminism and oppression could reveal how collectivities of women understand their oppression (what it *means* to them), and subsequently the possibilities for their liberation. In the following section, I detail the pluralism of liberal feminism, noting its sometimes incongruent commitments to classic liberalism and radical activism.

Liberal Feminism from its Classically Liberal Conceptions to its “Radical” Turn

Liberal feminism is closely related to the principles of classic liberalism. Classic liberalism is a social configuration situated in the individualistic ideals of the Enlightenment. John Stewart Mill described “liberty” as man’s inherent or natural right to govern himself (within reason):

The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.³⁷

Liberalism embraces notions of rationality and reasoning as a means of negotiating morality and individual worth. Liberalism is very interested in a division between the public and private spheres where rational decision making is assumed to belong within the public sphere. I explain the tenets of classic liberalism and how the classically liberal principles of autonomous individuality and self-empowerment organize political society more fully in subsequent chapters.

Liberal feminism, like classical liberalism, promotes political involvement (and individual liberation) through the quest for equal rights. The classically liberal feminist perspective is best articulated through the rhetoric of the suffragists who argued that women, isolated from the public sphere, have been denied the full rights of citizenship, including the rights to vote, divorce, assemble, and own property. Modern liberal feminism continues to encourage liberation through individual women’s rights. Jaggar explains, “The main thrust of the liberal feminist’s argument is that an individual woman

³⁷ John Stewart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 135 quoted in Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, (Oxford University Press, 2006): 104.

should be able to determine her social role with as great freedom as does a man.”³⁸ In this regard, liberal feminism embraces notions of rationality and reasoning embodied by liberalist thinking, noting that as human agents, women are just as capable of determining their own social positions as their male counterparts. However, as I explain in Chapter Two, the movement has expanded out from its early conceptions, taking on a radical potential (which, it arguably always had, even during suffrage) by embracing the notion of women as a subjugated sexual class.³⁹

Modern liberal feminism is largely associated with the second wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. It is often recognized as the most prominent type of feminist activism. Dow suggests that “By 1972, when *Ms.* magazine debuted and offered a visible, accessible press outlet for feminist views, liberal feminism was already well on its way to hegemonic status for the public.”⁴⁰ Liberal feminism is often understood to be the *only* type of feminism, and is credited with a number of social changes that occurred during the second wave. One of the most prominent gains procured through liberal feminism (though certainly through other forms of feminism as well) is reproductive rights.⁴¹ Another liberal feminist goal of the era was the attempted ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, which, while unsuccessful, certainly provided new spaces for dialogues

³⁸ Alison Jaggar, “Political Philosophies of Women’s Liberation,” in Mary Vetterling

Braggin, Frederick Elliston and Jane English, eds., *Feminism and Philosophy*, (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, 1997): 6–7.

³⁹ Susan Wendal, “A (qualified) Defense of Liberal Feminism,” *Hypatia*, 2, (1987): 65–94.

⁴⁰ Bonnie J. Dow, “Fixing Feminism: Women’s Liberation and the Rhetoric of the Television Documentary,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 90, (2004): 75.

⁴¹ Loretta Kensinger, “(In)Quest of Liberal Feminism,” *Hypatia*, 12, (1997): 178–197.

concerning equality and gender rights. Additionally, women's integration into the workforce, though not yet complete, is also attributed to the efforts of second wave liberal feminist activism.

However, it is important to address the problems that arise from allowing liberal feminism to serve as the standard form of feminist agitation. Kensinger explains:

Emphasizing liberal feminism's preeminence in reform movements marginalizes still other voices originally present in these debates. Feminist categories, in turn, begin to appear more oppositional than they actually are, leaving little room for analyzing the "messy" nature of coalition and alliance politics. Yet the institutionalization of social movement demands occurs not from the work of single arms of the movement ... Advances in women's educational, political, legal, and social status credited to liberal feminists were actually the result of a full spectrum of movement.⁴²

In the chapters to come, I expound on how Hoff Sommers, Bruce and Schlessinger are guilty of reducing nearly all contemporary feminist activism to liberal feminism. I also remark on how each author remembers liberal feminism from the 1960s and 1970s as a radical form of feminism.

Through partial memories of classically liberal feminism (i.e., memories of suffrage that emphasize the movement's classically liberal principles while "forgetting" its radical tendencies), the authors reconfigure second wave liberal feminism. Writing from a post-feminist perspective, these authors deny a relationship between patriarchy and the modern classically liberal state. They also suggest that women have learned to navigate patriarchy, using women's advances in education and the workplace as "proof" that patriarchy in the classically liberal state can be very advantageous to women when women adapt to it correctly.

⁴² Ibid., 189.

Introducing Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers, Tammy Bruce, and “Dr. Laura” Schlessinger

I attempted to gather a broad sample of rhetoric from Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Schlessinger that would be representative of their writings, websites, blogs, and when appropriate, radio addresses. I continued gathering narratives until I achieved redundancy with each author. In some cases, redundancy occurred more quickly than in others. For example, Hoff Sommers writes from an academic perspective and critiques feminism from a number of different angles. Bruce and Schlessinger are much more direct in their critiques and often use the same arguments repetitively to attack feminism. To use a baseball metaphor, Hoff Sommers has a curve ball, change up, splitter and fast pitch in her arsenal. Her opponents are forced to out think her, planning for what she will throw next. Bruce and Schlessinger have fewer pitches and are less complex, relying primarily on fast balls. While it hurts to swing and miss with Bruce and Schlessinger, it is also easier to hit one out of the park.

Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers is a former associate professor of philosophy and ethics and currently works with the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. She is best known for her books *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women* and *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism is Harming Our Young Men*. As both titles suggest, Hoff Sommers critiques twentieth century feminism, describing the vice that comes from radical feminist positions on patriarchy. Hoff Sommers’ work depicts how “victimology” that results from the belief in a male hierarchy has coupled with female chauvinism to disrupt American institutions.⁴³ Hoff

⁴³ American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Biography, Christina Hoff Sommers, retrieved July 14, 2009 from <http://www.aei.org/scholar/56>.

Sommers' memories of 1960s and 1970s feminism portray the second wave as the catalyst for the state of modern feminism. Her memories separate twentieth century feminism from earlier movements and remember the former as an immature and socially destructive social movement. The artifacts I will use to expose Hoff Sommers' narratives include her books, internet postings, and interviews.

Hoff Sommers suggests that feminism has evolved from a liberal movement dedicated to social equality to an "anti-intellectual" radical movement that embraces male-bashing and bitterness.⁴⁴ But unlike either Dr. Laura or Bruce, Hoff Sommers narrows her criticisms to issues of feminism within the academy and organizations, suggesting that women are being indoctrinated through an increasingly violent and discriminating movement centered on campuses. She states that "women's studies classes are increasingly a kind of initiation into the most radical wing, the most intolerant wing, of the feminist movement."⁴⁵

Hoff Sommers attempts to reveal inconsistencies and inaccuracies in "radical" feminist ideology. Also, her narratives present feminism as a type of disease where feminists promote their anti-masculine message to new generations of women, infecting them with a hatred for men that will spread throughout society. Interestingly, in her effort to portray feminism as a culturally salient and powerful social movement, Hoff Sommers works to debunk the movement by simultaneously portraying it as deranged and out of touch. Similar to Tammy Bruce, Hoff Sommers believes feminist rhetoric is

⁴⁴ Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women*, (New York, NY: Touchstone Books, 1994).

⁴⁵ Christina Hoff Sommers, interview by Ben Wattenberg, "Has Feminism Gone too Far?" *Think Tank*, November 4, 1994 retrieved April 10, 2008 from <http://www.menweb.org/paglsomm.htm>.

“victimization”—it is little more than conspiracy theories created by angry and marginalized women who seek someone (men) to blame for their own inadequacies.

Tammy Bruce is a past president of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW). She identifies as a lesbian and pro-choice libertarian. Her narratives reveal a conservative amalgam of classically liberal principles and moral traditionalist rhetoric. Bruce’s rhetoric is concerned with the “corruption” of feminism in contemporary society, where feminists have become “bitter” and have naively embraced socialist reforms (such as affirmative action and welfare). Her most recent book, *The New American Revolution: Using the Power of the Individual to Save Our Nation from Extremists*, discusses the problem of what Bruce considers “Left-Wing McCarthyists.” Bruce takes a strong stance against the evolution of contemporary “liberal” feminism, viewing it as one of the largest “mistakes” made by women in all of history. Like Hoff Sommers and Dr. Laura, Bruce has published a number of books and is an avid web blogger. As such, I will extract artifacts from her books, articles, website, and blog.

In a post-feminist spirit, Bruce suggests that the “original” feminist movement was a necessary period of agitation for the United States that resulted in the sexual and economic liberation of women. For Bruce, liberal feminism had the potential to liberate women, but in subsequent years has been corrupted by “leftist” politics that embrace narratives of “romanticized victimhood” that are ultimately disempowering women. Bruce buttresses her attack of today’s remnants of the second wave (which have become an entrenched, socialist elite) with liberal individualism. She creates a classically liberal “character,” the New American Individual (NAI), who adheres to the principles of freedom and individuality. Bruce serves as a token example of the NAI. She is a lesbian

and “reformed” feminist who sees past her “minority status” and takes on the responsibilities (patriotic duties) of a liberated individual. Unlike Dr. Laura or Hoff Sommers, Bruce is forced to reconcile her sexuality with her morally conservative audience. She uses token rhetoric to demonstrate how classically liberal societies are opportunistic (as opposed to oppressive) for minority populations.

Dr. Laura Schlessinger is a radio host and the popular author of numerous bestselling books. She identifies herself as a psychoanalyst and family therapist who is dedicated to providing families with advice for better personal relationships and happier marriages. She is a morally conservative member of the right, and as such, an avid critic of abortion, feminism, and “alternative” sexualities. Dr. Laura has won international acclaim for both her books and radio program, receiving a number of awards for her work. I draw on her numerous publications, including her books, magazine columns and web postings for examples of how she remembers feminism. I also look at some of the discourse used in her radio programs.

Dr. Laura’s narratives are indicative of the “Cult of True Womanhood,” an ideological concept that originated during the industrial revolution. “Cult” narratives promote the notion that women find their true power as wives and mothers. Dr. Laura positions “True Womanhood” in direct contrast to the “liberal” notions that she suggests have pervaded society since the 1960s and 1970s. Her narratives reveal inconsistencies with social justice movements like feminism and the Civil Rights movement, blaming their relaxed and diverse notion of families for what she perceives as the downfall of society and civic virtue. Dr. Laura’s belief in the “true nature” of women sets her narratives apart from Hoff Sommers and Bruce, who offer empowerment in the public

sphere through individualism. Dr. Laura is not against individualism; however, she believes female empowerment is found in the private sphere.

Dr. Laura's discourse concerning feminism employs terms like "evil," "destructive," "immature" and "irresponsible" in association with feminist activism. Her narratives provide an opportunity to explore how the meaning of feminism changes from notions of liberation and equality, to those of irresponsibility and childishness in contemporary memories of feminism. Her narratives also suggest that feminism is "unnatural," defining the movement as an attempt to demean the true nature of femininity and to ultimately destroy society through the death of the traditional family.

By analyzing the rhetoric of these three authors, this dissertation is designed to contribute to the study of communication. In particular, it is meant to enhance the relationship between feminist and memory studies, as well as provide support for a movement-as-meaning paradigm for understanding social movements. In regards to the former, there are relatively few memory studies (see Shome, 2001; Maddox, 2009) that focus exclusively on feminism and the feminist movement.⁴⁶ Subsequently, as Dow and Condit suggest, there are also relatively few feminist projects that adequately explore the rhetoric and politics employed by post-feminist organizations. This project engages in both areas, increasing the scope of memory studies to feminism and social movement while also addressing how memories of feminism contribute to post-feminist discourse.

The intersection between memory and movement provides a nice marriage of scholarly thought and opinion. In looking at the collective remembering of the past,

⁴⁶ Raka Shome, "White Femininity and the Discourse of the Nation: Re/membering Princess Diana," *Feminist Media Studies*, 1, (2001): 323–342; Kristy Maddox, "Winning the Right to Vote in 2004," *Feminist Media Studies*, 9, (2009): 73–94.

memory studies both complement and enhance a movement-as-meaning paradigm. At the heart of each is the goal of understanding the nature of human consciousness, and how in this case, collective remembering has the ability to both move and change social realities. As a feminist invested in rhetorical scholarship, I find it crucial to engage feminist narratives of all persuasions (even those that may support patriarchy) in order to understand how women frame their oppression, and subsequently to locate where they seek empowerment. My hope for this dissertation project is for a conception of feminism that is less concerned with the “true” definition of feminism or the identities that particular feminists hold and is more involved in engaging in the struggle against oppression and patriarchal practices.

Chapter Two

Remembering the Suffragist: Locating Classically Liberal Feminism in the Narratives of Christina Hoff Sommers

The dawn of the 1990s began a new and important journey for feminism. Gloria Steinem published her book, *Revolution From Within: A Book of Self-Esteem*; Susan Faludi exposed her readers to *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*; and even Ann Landers and her sister *Dear Abby* found themselves discussing the subjugation of a woman's body as a site of spectacle and performance.¹ Yet for some self-identified feminists, the critical lens through which this new "brand" of feminism focused was disfiguring. For some pundits, both feminist and otherwise, this new feminism represented a shift in feminist theory, moving from a desire to reform inequalities to a call for social revolution and victimization.² It was a move from "gender justice" to revolutionary change that "represented a top-to-bottom rejection of life as most people lived it."³

Some pundits sought to return feminist thought and theory to its "classically liberal" origins. Arguing that "legitimate feminism" focused only on issues of legal

¹ Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism: How Women have Betrayed Women* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1994).

² Bonnie J. Dow, "Review Essay: Reading the Second Wave." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 9, (2005): 89–107.

³ Sara Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003).

equality, these censors of modern feminism attempted to debunk what they saw as “beauty myth feminists” by reconstituting feminism as a theory and practice entrenched in the ideals of Enlightenment thinking.

Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers is one of these censors. As a former professor of philosophy and a current author of bestselling books, Hoff Sommers has dedicated her career to exploring “feminism and American culture, American adolescents, and morality in American society.”⁴ Unlike Tammy Bruce and Dr. Laura Schlessinger, Hoff Sommers’ critique of contemporary feminism is largely academic, discrediting current trends in feminist activism, theory, and scholarship.

In her 1994 book, *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women*, Hoff Sommers states that the feminist movement has been overtaken by radical “fanatics that are in our society.”⁵ She labels these fanatics “gender feminists.” Hoff Sommers explains that gender feminism represents a small but powerful group of feminist elite who:

believe that our society is best described as a patriarchy, a “male hegemony,” a “sex/gender” system in which the dominant gender works to keep women cowering and submissive ... Believing that women are virtually under siege, gender feminists naturally seek recruits to their side of the gender war. They seek support. They seek vindication. They seek ammunition.⁶

“Not everyone,” she explains, “is convinced that contemporary American women live in an oppressive ‘male hegemony.’”⁷ As an alternative, Hoff Sommers presents “equity

⁴ American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, “Biography: Christina Hoff Sommers” retrieved January 21, 2009 from <http://www.aei.org/scholars/scholarID.56,filter.all/scholar.asp>.

⁵ Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 16.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

feminism,” or “the traditional classically liberal humanistic feminism that was initiated more than 150 years ago.”⁸ She promotes a feminism that is less “radical” than gender feminism by urging women to seek liberation through the more traditional concepts of equality and individual freedom “especially in politics and education.”⁹ She backs her claims with the belief that “Most American women subscribe philosophically to that older ‘First Wave’ kind of feminism.”¹⁰

In this chapter, I demonstrate how Hoff Sommers employs classically liberal values to articulate an appropriate mode of feminist activism, one based on “rational behavior” and the assimilation of the liberal subject. To understand Hoff Sommers’ classically liberal take on feminism, I analyze several fragments of her writings throughout the chapter’s sections. I have selected texts in this chapter for their overlapping instrumental and constitutive narrative value. Hoff Sommers’ narratives function at an instrumental level as reactions to what she perceives as exigencies brought about by modern feminism. However, these same narratives go beyond instrumentality to perform ideological and rhetorical duties that constitute liberal feminism as a radical form of activism.¹¹

I argue that Hoff Sommers re-defines feminism in a way that fosters identifications between her readers and her concept of equity feminism. In Burkean

⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For a discussion between the functions of instrumental and constitutive narratives, see Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

terms, Hoff Sommers' memories function as "sense making" tools, allowing her audience to insert themselves within her narratives by creating subject positions of "us" and "them."¹² I provide a historical framework of feminism in the United States that demonstrates how Hoff Sommers cultivates identification with equity feminists (us) by remembering suffrage as a classically liberal movement that still thrives among American women. Hoff Sommers invokes classically liberal virtues to mobilize the equity feminist in a new struggle for women's liberation—the struggle against the destructive activism of gender feminists (them). In response to Hoff Sommers, I argue that classically liberal "virtues" are ideological constructions that assume a patriarchal order and support political conservatism and capitalism. As I conclude, Hoff Sommers' memories of suffrage in particular promote a more "traditional" concept of feminist activism and reduce other feminisms to illogical or illegitimate forms of activism.

A Framework of Feminism: The Movement and Hoff Sommers' Backlash

The "woman's rights movement," or the "first wave" of feminism (1830 to the mid-1920s), finds its origins in abolitionist and social temperance movements.¹³ First wave feminists were concerned with social issues like slavery, alcoholism, and prostitution, but because of their sex, were excluded from fully participating in anti-slavery and temperance groups. In response to their exclusion, first wave feminists organized around their womanhood and adopted the title of the "Woman's Rights

¹² Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969).

¹³ Karyln Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her Volume I: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Inc., 1989), 2.

Movement.” This marked the beginning of the long struggle for the equal rights of women in the United States.¹⁴

History commonly remembers first wave feminists as “suffragists” given their commitment to a woman’s right to vote (suffrage). The suffragists are often demarcated from other feminist activists based on the time period in which they were most active and the strategies they employed to subvert the social conventions of the time. Women of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were deemed incapable of political thought. Given their intellectual incapacity, it was imperative that women be excluded from making political decisions. As naturally submissive and dutiful creatures, the unseemly issues inherent to political deliberation were thought to cause women both psychological and physiological harm. Their minds were simply “unfit” for the task of politics. Women’s mental deficiencies also excluded them from higher education, and an uneducated mind could unleash havoc if allowed to deliberate over difficult social issues. Women, quite literally, had to be protected from themselves, and the state had to be protected from the whims of uneducated and mentally deficient women.

Early feminists did not necessarily disagree with these attitudes, but first wavers did find their exclusion from politics intolerable. Their reasons as to why varied. Liberal feminists argued for equal rights from the position of justice, employing the classically liberal notion of natural or inherent rights.¹⁵ The theory of natural rights finds all persons to be equal in politics and the law. Using the constitution as their guide, liberal first wave feminists argued that despite prevailing attitudes of the time, women were members of

¹⁴ Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume I*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

the state. As such, they possessed the right to vote, hold office, and own property.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton told her audience at Seneca Falls:

Among the many important questions which have been brought before the public, there is none that more vitally affects the whole human family than that which is technically called Woman's Rights. Every allusion to the degraded and inferior position occupied by women all over the world has been met by scorn and abuse. From the man of highest mental cultivation to the most degraded wretch who staggers in the streets do we meet ridicule, and coarse jests, freely bestowed upon those who dare assert that woman stands by the side of man, his equal, placed here by her God, to enjoy with him this 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.¹⁶

Stanton's rhetoric reveals how an argument from justice frames equality as woman's due right. Justice arguments found that, like men, women were born to this world to create and prosper. As persons created by the same God, women deserved the same rights afforded to men.

Liberal feminists were joined in their struggle with "temperance feminists;" however temperance activism was driven by different exigencies than its liberal contemporary. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was founded in 1874 to battle the physical, social, and psychological effects alcohol had on women.¹⁷ In the late 1800s, alcohol consumption in the United States was three times higher than today.¹⁸ The WCTU argued that while some women became alcoholics, the true danger

¹⁶ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Speech at the Seneca Falls Convention, 1848, quoted in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her, Volume II*, (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1989): 43.

¹⁷ Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume I*.

¹⁸ Ibid.

was their drunken husbands. In most states, women had very little recourse should their husbands abuse alcohol. They had no rights to their children, property or belongings.¹⁹

Unlike the liberal first wave feminists who were often ridiculed for acting outside gender boundaries, temperance feminists found that their cause inspired an “appropriate” form of activism for women. They could argue for women’s rights, including suffrage, while not disturbing the natural order. Emphasizing their roles as wives and mothers, temperance work allowed a woman to perform as both “true woman” and as concerned citizen.²⁰

Temperance feminists organized around the argument of expediency. Campbell explains, “the argument from expediency presumed that women and men were fundamentally different, so that it would be beneficial, that is, desirable and prudent, to give women rights because of the effect on society.”²¹ If women were educated, for example, they could better perform their duties as mothers; if they possessed the rights to sue and own property, women could protect themselves from their wayward husbands, thus easing society of the burden of homeless women and children. Campbell explains that temperance feminists argued “If women were allowed to vote, they would bring to bear on politics their purity, piety, and domestic concerns, and thus purify government and make it more responsive to the needs of women.”²²

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 14.

²² Ibid.

An excellent example of an argument from expediency comes from Clarina Howard Nichols in her speech “The Responsibilities of Woman.” Nichols argues that women can become better wives and mothers if granted equal opportunities:

it is only since I have met the varied responsibilities of life, that I have comprehended woman’s sphere; and I have come to regard it as lying within the whole circumference of humanity. If, as is claimed by the most ultra opponents of the wife’s argument in favor of her legal nonentity, the *interests of the parties are identical*, then I claim, as a legitimate conclusion, that their spheres are also identical. For interests determine duties, and duties are the landmarks of spheres. Wherever a man may *rightfully* go, it is proper that woman should go, and share his responsibilities. Wherever my husband goes, thither would I follow him, if to the battle-field. No, I would not follow him *there*; I would hold him back by his coat-skirts, and say, “Husband, this is wrong. What will you gain by war? It will cost as much money to fight for a bag of gold, or a lot of land, as it will to pay the difference; and if you fight, our harvests are wasted, or hearths made desolate, our homes filled with sorrow, and vice and immorality roll back upon us from the fields of human slaughter.”²³

In Nichols’ argument, it is the wife’s duty to help her husband see reason. Expediency arguments extended the women’s sphere to the public based on the need for women to temper male aggressiveness (similar arguments extended to ending man’s “penchant” for alcohol or “vice”). However, Nichols’ speech also points to the marriage of justice and expediency arguments that colors much first wave rhetoric. The “women’s sphere” is at once portrayed as extending to all facets of social life (the women’s sphere becomes both public and private). At the same time, it does so based on woman’s natural role as her husband’s helpmate. Melding justice and expediency arguments allowed first wave feminists to defend their positions on equal rights without offending their audience’s beliefs on the proper role of women.²⁴

²³Clarina Howard Nichols, “The Responsibilities of Woman” quoted in KarylN Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume II*, (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1989): 125–126.

²⁴ Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume I*.

As this discussion suggests, women of the first wave had to legitimize their presence in the public sphere. In the nineteenth century, speaking publically and assuming an authoritative role was an offense to the morality of women. It was also a challenge to the “natural order.” The art of rhetoric was literally a patriarchal construction. Created for men, by men and without any thought of feminine participation, public speech was entirely based on the experiences of the male rhetor. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell explains:

Men have an ancient and honorable rhetorical history. Their speeches and writings, from antiquity to the present, are studied and analyzed by historians and rhetoricians. Public persuasion has been a conscious part of the Western male’s heritage from ancient Greece to the present. This is not an insignificant matter. For centuries, the ability to persuade others has been part of the Western man’s standard of excellence in many areas, even of citizenship itself. Moreover, speaking and writing eloquently has long been the goal of the humanistic tradition in education.²⁵

Void of a similar tradition, women needed a new strategy to legitimize their arguments. They had to invent their own personas and create their own public spaces.²⁶ The suffragists’ first order was to overcome the prevailing belief that women were incapable of political persuasion and reason. However, given their relative exclusion from higher education, women were forced to forgo arguments steeped in the traditions of science and logic. Instead, they legitimized their arguments using their personal experiences in the domestic realm and their superior morality as evidence. Rather than engaging in “persuasion,” a method that requires the rhetor to assume an authoritative persona, the first wave feminists assumed a more submissive role, appearing in front of

²⁵ Ibid., 1.

²⁶ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Inventing Women: From Amaterasu to Virginia Woolf.” *Women’s Studies in Communication*, 21 (1998):111–121.

their audiences as peers and asking audience members to simply listen and form their own opinions.²⁷

The journey of the first wave feminists was a long and arduous one and its success is often measured in terms of woman's right to vote. However, first wave feminists also succeeded in creating a "place" for women in the public sphere that went far beyond procuring individual women's rights. Whether explicitly or implicitly, first wave rhetoric revealed the cultural subjugation of women. As an example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton is best known for her suffrage activism, but is also responsible for drawing attention to women's plight as members of a subjugated class:

As the nations of the earth emerge from a state of barbarism, the sphere of woman gradually becomes wider, but not even under what is thought to be the full blaze of the sun of civilization is it what God designed it to be. In every country and clime does man assume the responsibility of marking out the path for her to tread. In every country does he regard her as being inferior to himself, and one whom he is to guide and control.²⁸

Arguments like Stanton's revealed the state of women's oppression both inside and outside the voting booth, and would serve to inspire future feminists in their own struggles against patriarchy.²⁹ First wave arguments also provided the necessary foundation for subsequent forms of feminism to emerge.

Hoff Sommers' memories of suffrage rarely recognize arguments that portray women as a subjugated class. Instead her vision of equity feminism highlights arguments from justice, where success is measured via changes in the law and through individualist

²⁷ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume II: Key Texts of the Early Feminists*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Inc., 1989).

²⁸ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume II*: 43.

²⁹ Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume I*.

notions of self-empowerment. Equity feminism is a masculine form of liberal feminism that celebrates traditional (male) institutions and encourages women to find a place within them. Hoff Sommers explains that there is “no girl crisis” in the United States.³⁰ “After all, women in this country have their freedom; they have achieved parity with men in most of the ways that count.”³¹

Her memory of the first wave informs her critique of gender feminism (to which she assigns what many feminists would identify as contemporary liberal and radical feminisms). Hoff Sommers argues that modern feminist movements have diverged from their first wave origins, becoming more radical and less liberal as time goes on. She explains that unlike later feminist movements, first wave feminism had:

a specific agenda demanding for women the same rights before the law that men enjoyed. The suffrage had to be won, and the laws regarding property, marriage, divorce, and child custody had to be made equitable. More recently, abortion rights had to be protected. The old mainstream feminism concentrated on legal reforms. In seeking specific and achievable ends, it did not promote a gynocentric stance: self-segregation of women had no part in an agenda that sought equality and equal access for women.³²

Hoff Sommers characterizes first wave feminism as being invested in equal rights from institutions. She distinguishes the classically liberal struggle for equal rights as an appropriate “goal” for feminist activism and separates the first wave from other feminist activism.

³⁰ Christina Hoff Sommers, “Books: The War Against Boys,” *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*, June, 2001, retrieved July 3, 2009 from <http://www.aei.org/book/515>.

³¹ Christina Hoff Sommers, “Feminism and Freedom,” *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*, August 1, 2008, retrieved July 3, 2009 from <http://www.aei.org/issue/28410>.

³² Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 23.

However, in many ways, the liberal first wave feminists were not as classically liberal as Hoff Sommers remembers. As evidenced by the close and successful relationship between liberal feminists and temperance feminists, first wave feminists did view women as a subjugated class. Stanton's iconic claim that "Man cannot speak for her" suggests that women's liberation was not simply about legal rights, but was also concerned with a more radical agenda of overturning cultural practices that excluded women from public participation. In fact, Stanton made a very "radical" statement at Seneca Falls when she said:

Man cannot speak for her, because he has been educated to believe that she differs from him so materially, that he cannot judge of her thoughts, feelings, and opinions by his own. Moral beings can only judge others by themselves. The moment they assume a different nature for any of their own kind, they utterly fail. The drunkard was hopelessly lost until it was discovered that he was governed by the same laws of mind as the sober man. Then with what magic power, by kindness and love, was he raised from the slough of despond and placed rejoicing on high land.³³

This is not rhetoric, as Hoff Sommers would suggest, that is satisfied by changes in law alone. It is rhetoric that seeks to alter prevailing cultural attitudes toward gender. Stanton is embracing the radical concept (described later) of eliminating a sex-class system that mocks the notion of the rational woman. Or, as Lucretia Coffin Mott pointed out in 1849, the system where the proper position of women "has been a theme for ridicule, for satire and sarcasm."³⁴ Additionally, as many feminists have argued, first wave feminists engaged in radical displays by simply speaking in public. Eisenstein explains, "they had

³³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton quoted in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume II*, 42.

³⁴ Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume II*, 72.

to step outside the boundaries of established liberal thought, which were intended only for men.”³⁵

To better understand how Hoff Sommers’ memories of first wave feminism inform her perception of modern feminism, it is helpful to understand how the movement has evolved in the years following woman’s suffrage. Over the last century, liberal feminism has emerged as the dominant form of activism. However, like Hoff Sommers suggests, it has adopted a more “radical” agenda than is commonly associated with first wave activism. In the 1950s, new liberal feminist organizations such as NOW (the National Organization for Women) and the Women’s Equity League began to promote an “updated” liberal feminist agenda.³⁶ Members of these organizations argued that while women had the right to vote, they remained underrepresented and comparatively underprivileged. The new liberal feminist agenda established footholds in more radical social movements (e.g., communist, socialist, and later civil rights movements). While liberal feminists remained committed to the liberal principles of equality and individual rights to freedom, they also more directly addressed social issues that concerned women as a subjugated class.³⁷ Liberal feminists established what would come to be a radical feminist belief in “sexual classes” where women represented the less important or less dominant class.³⁸

³⁵ Zillah R. Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1993): 6.

³⁶ Susan M. Hartman, *The Other Feminists*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

The idea of a “sexual class” assumes that Western societies are defined by patriarchal systems of oppression that value the male subject position. Feminists argue that in the United States, women’s social value has historically been associated with care giving, nurturing and family. Feminists further contend that these roles continue to define women’s participation in the public sector. In contrast, masculine roles that emphasize protection, providing, and prowess continue to dominate social attitudes of masculinity and are valued over traditional female roles. As a result, the female subject position remains subordinate to males, both privately and publically.³⁹

The development of a radical agenda in liberal feminism speaks to the diversity and broad scope of the movement. Yet, unfortunately, liberal feminism is often misunderstood to be *the* feminism.⁴⁰ The recognition of liberal feminism as a “mainstream” movement often renders other forms of feminism nonexistent and ignores some of the very important differences among feminist activists. These include differences of race, class, sexuality, and even political commitment. More importantly, the tendency to recognize liberal feminism as mainstream draws attention away from the problems that classically liberal ideologies create for the female subject. It fails to recognize the contradiction between the patriarchal and individualist tendencies of classic liberalism (which I describe in a later section) and the “egalitarian and collectivist” nature of feminism.⁴¹

³⁹ Julia Wood, *Who Cares: Women, Care, and Culture* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994).

⁴⁰ Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 3.

Ironically, the greatest threat to feminism could quite well be the success of liberal feminism. While gendered inequalities continue to plague Western societies, feminist movements are responsible for substantive changes in women's lives. Women are better represented legally, having equal opportunities to vote and own property. Laws have been established to prohibit sexual discrimination and harassment in American institutions. The modern woman also enjoys better economic opportunities than her historical counterparts. While not being paid an equal wage to men, she has access to the public sector and continues to experience increased material rewards.

The successes of feminism are so substantial that some believe the movement has run its course. They believe that women no longer experience "enough" subjugation to warrant a robust feminist movement that critiques patriarchal social practices from top to bottom. Assuming that "women have never had it so good," these individuals undermine modern feminist efforts by pointing to the successes of modern women as evidence that society is not organized by patriarchal practices, or if it is, women no longer suffer from them.⁴² In fact, they argue, some women flourish. As an example, Hoff Sommers critiques the idea that women continue to experience economic oppression:

Women are now approaching parity with men in law school, medical school, business school. There are more women than men in college. A lot of this happened in the so-called backlash decade. So that, in itself, is a myth. What historians and economists will have to explain was how there was so much progress in so short a time. That's the big story of the eighties, not the backlash. They got it backwards.⁴³

⁴² Bonnie J. Dow, "Hegemony, Feminist Criticism and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 7, (1990): 261–275; Bonnie J. Dow, "*Ally McBeal*, Lifestyle Feminism, and the Politics of Personal Happiness," *Communication Review*, 5, (2001): 259–264.

⁴³ Christina Hoff Sommers, interview by Scott London, "The Future of Feminsim: An Interview With Christina Hoff Sommers," retrieved July 10, 2009, from <http://www.scottlondon.com/interviews/sommers.html>.

Hoff Sommers' equity feminism is thus committed to returning feminism to its more traditional roots. She explains, "The loss of faith in classically liberal solutions, coupled with the conviction that women remain besieged and subject to a relentless and vicious male backlash has turned the movement inward."⁴⁴ But Hoff Sommers' reduction of modern liberal feminism to a radical form of feminist activism (what she calls, "gender feminism") denies an alliance between the classically liberal agenda of the suffragists and the modern day liberal feminist agenda of equality. This is a mistake.

Hoff Sommers suggests that liberal feminism has assumed a radical position that favors female values over males. She argues that an essentialist form of gender feminism originating in the 1960s dominates today's feminist landscape. Hoff Sommers explains, "The message is that women must be 'gynocentric,' they must join with and be loyal only to women."⁴⁵ Many feminists, however, would disagree with her. For example, Echols admits that by the mid 1970s, radical feminism had been all but overtaken by essentialists. However, many women and feminists alike failed to identify with essentialist views of gender and turned instead to liberal feminism.⁴⁶ Eisenstein states, "Though much feminism has moved beyond its liberal moorings, most feminist national strategy today remains liberal feminist."⁴⁷

Hoff Sommers' claim that modern liberal feminism is an essentialist and radical movement that stems from the 1960s and 1970s is simply not supported by the history of

⁴⁴ Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 24.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁶ Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

⁴⁷ Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, xv.

the movement. It might be more appropriate to say that modern liberal feminism has a radical potential, but that potential has not been realized. The tendency for liberal feminism to be remembered as “the” feminism represents a preference for assimilation at the risk of liberation. As I argue in the next section, the relationship between liberalism and patriarchy makes critiquing “feminist” positions such as Hoff Sommers’ all the more pertinent for the future of women’s liberation.

Classically Liberal Thought as Ideology

In this section I introduce the tenets of classic liberalism and meditate on how they are reflected in Hoff Sommers’ writings. In particular, classically liberal thinking supports Hoff Sommers’ memory of feminism, providing the necessary framework for rendering the gender feminist an enemy and the classically liberal feminist a friend. Moreover, as I elaborate, classic liberalism is related to other ideologies. Not only does liberalism support the autonomous individual’s role in the state, it also helps build political conservatism and capitalism. By hearkening to classical liberal ideologies in her memories of feminism, Hoff Sommers bolsters these ideologies while making “radical” collectivist feminists the enemy.

Classic liberalism is a political philosophy that “focuses on the idea of limited government, the maintenance of the rule of law, the avoidance of arbitrary and discretionary power, the sanctity of private property and freely made contracts, and the responsibility of individuals for their own fates.”⁴⁸ As a form of government, it offers a

⁴⁸ Alan Ryan, “Liberalism,” In Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005): 293.

combination of freedom and authority.⁴⁹ It assumes that humans are naturally progressive beings, and when left to their own desires, they will create, explore, and prosper.⁵⁰ In relation to monarchies and totalitarian states, classic liberalism is a progressive form of government. At the same time, it is commonly associated with political conservatism. Conservatism is based on the concept of traditionalism and the maintenance of established political institutions.⁵¹ Conservatives are wary of change, specifically immediate or large scale change. They fear that altering the established system leads to chaos and despotism.⁵²

The alliance between classic liberalism and conservatism is especially strong when aimed “against the common enemy, socialism;” but classic liberals are more favorable to social change than their conservative allies.⁵³ Most notably, classic liberals support social change when it is coupled with *economic* change.⁵⁴ Quinton explains that “Classic liberals favour change, admittedly in the economy and society at large,” and believe “an unfettered market will lead to the greatest possible satisfaction of human needs and desires and the most productive use of resources.”⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, then,

⁴⁹ Ryan, “Liberalism.”

⁵⁰ Jonathan Wolff, *Introduction to Political Philosophy*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press).

⁵¹ Anthony Quinton, “Conservatism” *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005): 244–268.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

most classically liberal governments are supported by capitalist economies that favor limited government interference and rely on the entrepreneurship of the citizenry.

The relationship between government and economy in a classically liberal system is supported by two important principles. These are the rights to autonomous (free) individuality and “natural” (basic) human rights. Wolff explains the latter:

Within liberal circles it is often taken as a fundamental axiom that people have certain basic rights. Normally included are the right to life, free speech, free assembly, and freedom of movement, together with the rights to vote and stand for office. Some theorists, though not all, add rights to a decent standard of living (shelter, food, and health care).⁵⁶

Classic liberals argue that restrictions on these liberties are only justified if they serve to protect basic human rights. John Stuart Mill, for example, argues that while the state has the duty to exert a necessary amount of control over people’s public lives (to prevent harm and promote stability), the state should have little or no control over people’s private lives, as people are reasonable creatures and know what they need to make themselves content.

Writing in the late eighteenth century, Kant associates natural human rights with autonomous individuality or the “enlightenment” of the individual:

Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man’s inability to make use of his reason without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another.⁵⁷

For Kant, individuality represents a degree of maturity whereby the autonomous individual is liberated from his or her “tutor” to think and act freely. As people develop

⁵⁶ Wolff, *Introduction to Political Philosophy*, 115.

⁵⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 7.

their individuality, they become more useful to society as producers and become positive examples to their fellow citizens. Others can vicariously embrace liberty by observing the autonomous individual and in turn find their own liberty through replication.⁵⁸

Hoff Sommers' criticisms of modern feminism reflect classically liberal ideologies. Hoff Sommers uses the suffragists as the hallmarks for autonomous individuality, noting how they agitated for change using classically liberal principles of self worth and equality:

“We ask for no better laws than those you have made for yourselves. We need no other protection than that which your present laws secure to you,” said Elizabeth Cady Stanton, perhaps the ablest exponent of equity feminism, addressing the New York State Legislature in 1854.⁵⁹

As Hoff Sommers concludes of the first wave: “The equity agenda may not yet be fully achieved, but by any reasonable measure, equity feminism has turned out to be a great American success story.”⁶⁰ The classically liberal *topoi* of equity feminism can also provide inspiration for women who continue to experience subjugation.

In an online article entitled, “Feminism and Freedom,” Hoff Sommers further articulates how classically liberal feminism provides a template for women’s liberation in the modern era:

Feminism in its classical phase was a critical chapter in the history of freedom. For most of the world’s women, that history has just begun; for them, classical feminism offers a tried-and-true roadmap to equality and freedom. And even in the West, there are unresolved equity issues, and the work of feminism is not over. Who needs feminism? We do. The world does. Women everywhere need

⁵⁸ Wolff, *Introduction to Political Philosophy*.

⁵⁹ Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 2; citing Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Seneca Falls Address,” in Ellen Carol Dubois, *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton—Susan B. Anthony Reader*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 51.

⁶⁰ Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 22.

the liberty to be what they are—not, as contemporary feminism insists, liberation *from* what they are. This we can see if we look back at the history of women’s liberation—not as it is taught in women’s studies departments, but as it truly was.⁶¹

Here, Hoff Sommers suggests that there is an inherent natural woman who cannot (and should not) be changed by social forces. The natural woman is a “true” autonomous individual whose quest for liberty is waylaid by radical feminist activism, an individual who only need be what “she is.” Hoff Sommers remembers first wave feminism as the most authentic feminist version of this classically liberal struggle.

These examples reveal the relationship between the autonomous individual (in this case, the suffragist) and the larger social group (women seeking liberation). The suffragists, as autonomous individuals, seek inclusion in the state through individual rights; and they are rewarded with increased material rewards. These examples also point to a contradiction inherent to classically liberal philosophies. This is the tension that exists between the principles of autonomous individuality and group cohesion. While the autonomous individual is the epicenter of classically liberal theory, also important is the cohesion, maintenance, and protection of the state: Assuming that the state were made up of only autonomous individuals, how would it survive their infinite peculiarities and conflicts?

To maintain cohesion, classic liberals argue that the prosperity of the state is dependent upon the creation of an educated society (to be done through state mandated and regulated education).⁶² Through education, individuals come to identify strongly

⁶¹ Hoff Sommers, “Feminism and Freedom.”

⁶² Wolff, *Introduction to Political Philosophy*.

with the state and its laws. Thus, education helps individuals to avoid bringing harm to themselves, to others, and to the state. Additionally, education teaches individuals to view other autonomous individuals as members of their group (i.e., the individual comes to view her or himself as autonomous while simultaneously viewing her or himself as part of the citizenry).

Classically liberal philosophers are quick to point out that education is not indoctrination.⁶³ Rather, education reinforces or “formalizes” the attitudes and beliefs the individual already holds as a member of a specific community.⁶⁴ Rousseau, for instance, felt that all individuals should learn the concepts that make up the “general will” of the state and the appropriate skills to actively participate in a democratic society. In Rousseau’s view, education should assume a quasi-religious position that promotes civic virtue.⁶⁵ In a classically liberal state, alternative perspectives (such as gender feminism) are viewed as challenges to the established norms (civic virtues) that maintain order. They present a danger to the cohesion of the collectivity and subsequently the continued progress of the liberal individual (via the liberal state).

Hoff Sommers argues that gender feminists are attacking education, one of the most crucial institutions for the advancement of the state (and thus autonomous individuality):

If one believes that all knowledge is socially constructed to serve the powers that be, or, more specifically, if one holds that the science and culture we teach are basically a “patriarchal construction” designed to support a “male hegemony,”

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

then one denies, *as a matter of principle*, any important difference between reality and propaganda, between objective teaching and inculcating a set of beliefs. Many campus feminists do, in fact, reject these distinctions, and that is pedagogically and politically irresponsible and dangerous.⁶⁶

Hoff Sommers claims that “cadres of well-trained zealots from the feminist classrooms are vengefully poised to find sexism in every cranny of their environment.”⁶⁷ The gender feminist claim of a “sex/gender” system where men work collectively to keep women down, is seen to be more of an ideological doctrine promulgated by radical feminist ideologues than a credible theory.

In addition to regulated education, classic liberalism also maintains cohesion through the right to vote and the commitment to achieving justice through equitable legislation. According to John Stuart Mill, the individual has the right to vote for laws that will affect her or his freedom (both positively and negatively). Liberty is established as a moral imperative, as it provides a vehicle for social improvement; but it is difficult to maintain order if each individual is completely free.⁶⁸ What, for example, would stop the autonomous individual from hurting others or taking from others if he or she were free to pursue his or her own desires? Rousseau recognizes this problem and explains that procuring what one desires through impulsive (and perhaps harmful) actions is not indicative of freedom, but rather “slavery” as one becomes bound to his or her rash behavior.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 97.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶⁸ Wolff, *Introduction to Political Philosophy*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

For Hoff Sommers, the gender feminist is an example of a woman who, in attempting to find liberation, has become a slave to her political commitments:

Their belief in the superiority of “women’s ways of knowing” fosters a sense of solidarity and cultural community that seems to have allowed them to overlook the fact that their doctrine tends to segregate women in a culture of their own, that it increases social divisiveness along gender lines, and that it may seriously weaken the American academy. Nor does it worry these feminists that their teaching allows insecure men once again to patronize and denigrate women as the naïve sex that thinks with its heart, not with its head.⁷⁰

The inability of the rash individual (gender feminist) to see reason presents a serious problem to the classically liberal state. Rousseau addresses this problem with his notion of “positive freedom” or the ability to live a life that the *rational* person would choose to live. He explains that this can only happen in a civil society where autonomous individuals accept and concede to the laws established by the state (which are presumably both equitable and just). The autonomous individual can find freedom by following the laws that serve the “general will” (majority opinion) of the people.⁷¹

However, laws do not always translate into emancipation. For example, Hoff Sommers cannot ignore the fact that women have enjoyed the same legal liberties as men since 1920. Yet, despite their right to vote, she admits women continue to struggle for social equality and treatment as full citizens:

Every day the public is witness to feminist outrage at how badly women are treated: in the workplace, in the courts, on dates, in marriages, in the schools—by

⁷⁰ Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 76–77.

⁷¹ The concept of general will is found in a number of classically liberal canons. Depending on the writer’s perspective of what role government should take in the life of the individual, general will can mean the will of the majority. In the United States, where some of the founders feared majority tyranny, the general will can reflect the attitudes and beliefs that have been voted into law by the people. It can also reflect the decisions of those law makers who have been chosen by the public for their ability to determine the best course of action.

men mostly, but sometimes by other women. Much of what is reported is true, and some of it is very disturbing.⁷²

By Hoff Sommers' own admission, women continue to battle oppression despite their political emancipation. Constraints on gender are just as much social as they are legal. Her slippage here is not uncommon, for as McLaughlin and Carter suggest, "With the 'mainstreaming' of feminism, one enduring assumption has been that women's success is to be measured by virtue of the extent to which we have been able to overcome exclusion from spaces associated with masculine dominance."⁷³ Despite laws that provide space for the feminine presence in the public sphere, we continuously see that representation does not equal fair treatment.

This may be partially attributed to the liberal principle of social cohesion. As mentioned earlier, classic liberals believe that to maintain order and to ensure that people will enact the "right" laws, the state must create a strong sense of group identity (even if this identity is under values and labels of "individualism" or "freedom"). However, social cohesion can often serve to justify injustice. The right to vote becomes the tool to silence alternative opinions.⁷⁴ Using Rousseau as an example, Wolff explains: "In order for Rousseau to be able to argue that democracy is instrumentally justified—that it is a highly reliable way of achieving morally correct outcomes—he has to draw the bonds of social unity very tight. So tight, in fact, that the system becomes unacceptably

⁷² Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 41.

⁷³ Lisa McLaughlin and Cynthia Carter, "Complicating Gendered Spaces," *Feminist Media Studies*, 4, (2004): 235–238.

⁷⁴ Wolff, *Introduction to Political Philosophy*.

repressive.”⁷⁵ Laws may be subject to the people’s vote, but they reflect a society’s values and almost always favor “normalized” values. The dominant bloc can justify oppression by reinforcing certain moral principles over others (e.g., it is a woman’s primary responsibility to care for her children) and punishing violators for harming society as a whole (e.g., increases in crime, suicide, divorce, infidelity, or decreases in learning, education, etc. are perceived as the result of women not properly caring for their families).⁷⁶ Therefore, laws do not necessarily improve or change social positions. Instead, they may, and often do, legitimize discrimination.⁷⁷

Karl Marx argued that the primary cause of injustice in a classically liberal government is the separation of the public and private spheres.⁷⁸ Very often, the restrictions that regulate participation in the public sphere affect freedom in the private sphere. For example, laws that prohibited women from owning property subsequently affected their private lives. If they were to lose a spouse to death, abandonment, or divorce, they often lost their income, home, and standard of living. Marx’s solution was to allow individuals to voice their thoughts in all forms of legislation that affect them (work, family, etc.).

Marx was additionally wary of the capitalist economies that support most classically liberal governments. Capitalism, driven by free markets and competition,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 89.

⁷⁶ This is reflective of Lord Justice Devlin’s *Morals and the Criminal Law* where he argues that society first holds moral principles, which it then puts into law. These laws are used to punish violators, who are not necessarily criminals (i.e., they may not be thieves, murders, rapists, etc.) but rather individuals who fail to live a moral life as defined by the majority.

⁷⁷ Wolff, *Introduction to Political Philosophy*.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

inevitably creates winners and losers. The winner's economic gains (increased profits) will certainly spill over into his or her private life as they will provide for a better standard of living. The same will be true for the loser. When put in these terms, we see that classic liberalism seeks equality through political emancipation (the rights to vote, own property, etc.), but falls short in providing the full, social emancipation of the individual. Instead, it thwarts the individual from achieving liberty by pitting people against one another (either economically or politically). Marx went so far as to suggest that classic liberalism is little more than a farce of liberty where unequal individuals compete on a day to day basis for the procurement of happiness. It is ridiculous, Marx argued, to call such a society "free." In his view, a truly liberated society is one where individuals are themselves equal members at every level, where they work collectively towards the progress of the state.⁷⁹

Feminist philosophers are also wary of classic liberalism and its capitalist tendencies, and for very similar reasons as Marx. Some feel that the capitalist economies that support classically liberal societies rely on a system of male dominance. Others argue that it is male dominance itself that originally created and now supports capitalism. Jaggar and Young argue that the history of women's exclusion from the public sphere reveals the relationships between liberalism, capitalism, and universal male values, labeling all three as forms of patriarchy. They point to the masculine traditions of the most prominent classically liberal thinkers as evidence:

in the Western tradition, these philosophers include Aristotle, Aquinas, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Sartre, who in a tradition that has invariably regarded rationality

⁷⁹ Ibid.

as the essential human characteristic, argued that women's capacity for reason was different from and inferior to men's.⁸⁰

Some feminists further articulate that capitalism reinforces patriarchy through a system of competition and domination of material goods.⁸¹ They argue that feminist activism that works within a capitalist system establishes a "woman's place" more than creating any real change. The social spheres that reproduce gender, such as capitalism, must be reformed in order to establish more equitable distributions of power.⁸² Marxist feminists argue that classically liberal ideologies are rooted far too deeply in patriarchal practices for that change to occur. Pateman states, "It is no accident that fraternity appears historically hand in hand with liberty and equality, nor that it means exactly what it says: brotherhood."⁸³

And yet there is a long history of positive alliances between feminism and liberal values. Early feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Harriet Taylor provide apt examples. In protesting for equality, these women stepped outside patriarchal boundaries that recognized men as citizens and women as helpmates. As mentioned earlier, they challenged the liberal notions of public and private spheres by publicizing their own personal experiences. Certainly their voices alone challenged the

⁸⁰ Allison M. Jaggar and Iris Marion Young, *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998): 1.

⁸¹ Jane Mansbridge and Susan Moller Okin, "Feminism," in Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005): 269–290.

⁸² Seyla Benhabib, "The Generalized and Concrete Other: The Kohlberg—Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory," in Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, eds., *Feminism as Critique*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1987): 77-95.

⁸³ Carole Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract," in Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, eds., *Contemporary Political Philosophy 2nd ed.*, (1980; repr. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 76.

dominant ideological beliefs that precluded women from speaking in public. From these examples, first wave liberal feminism appears to be naturally subversive to classically liberal ideologies.

However, there is a contradiction inherent to classical liberalism, which inflects liberal feminism as well. Liberal feminism attempts to dismantle power structures that privilege men, while at the same time it reinforces patriarchal practices that support a classically liberal society.⁸⁴ Eisenstein explains that this contradiction is a result of the “invisibility” of ideology. She argues that classic liberalism renders patriarchy an “everyday” or “common sense” practice:

Because the liberal values of independence, equality of opportunity, and individuals are the predominant and accepted values of Western society, they have lost their “particular” identity and history for most members of liberal society. They are accepted as a specific ideology. Until liberalism is viewed as a political ideology by (liberal) feminists, they will be unable to identify the contradiction inherent in liberal feminism. As long as the liberalism in feminism parades invisibly, it cannot be assessed as contradictory with feminism, nor can dimensions of it be self-consciously reworked.⁸⁵

The contradiction inherent to liberal feminism can be seen in Hoff Sommers’ narratives. She articulates the importance of individual rights in a classically liberal state, but fails to recognize the patriarchal ideologies that support a classically liberal system.

Hoff Sommers states:

If a woman chooses to be a conventional wife and mother, then, fine, that is the triumph of feminism—that we can have choices as men have. But the thing is, I would go even further. I think that many women choose to continue to be very feminine. They enjoy feminine artifice—doing their nails, their hair, wearing high heels, and fishnet stockings.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*.

⁸⁵ Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, 4

⁸⁶ Hoff Sommers, “The Future of Feminism.”

Hoff Sommers' definition of "choice" seems to suggest that women are political equals, having the same opportunities as men. At the same time, she is supporting a feminism where women are "defining their own needs in ways that please men and are punished for resistance."⁸⁷ Hoff Sommers is missing the "particular identity" of "feminine artifice" that objectifies the feminine body, the "conventional" subjectivity that identifies submitting to men as the best choice for a woman. Perspectives like Hoff Sommers', which fail to address the power structures that support liberal societies, do little to dismantle the social constraints that oppress women.

Liberal feminism can and should be more than an addition to liberalism. It must recognize the status and subjugation of women as a social class. If we are to use Hoff Sommers' interpretation of an appropriate liberal feminism (i.e., equity feminism), we may see women continue to amass personal achievements based on their individual merit; but in failing to challenge the patriarchal order that continues to inform our current realities, there will always be a more "natural" place for women than the public sphere. Women's presence may be accepted, but without a commitment to dismantling patriarchy, women will remain the other in relation to the ideal male citizen subject.

Solidifying a Subjectivity: Reconstituting the Suffragist as the Modern Day Feminist

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke explains that people are essentially "apart from one another."⁸⁸ Rhetoric is the tool that brings them together. Burke describes this coming together as identification and "compensatory to division."⁸⁹ He explains, "If men

⁸⁷ Mansbridge and Moller Okin, "Feminism," 277.

⁸⁸ Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 22.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity.”⁹⁰ Through a process of identification, audience members come to see their values as consubstantial to the values of a rhetor. Publics are constituted through rhetorical devices that transform the individual into a member of a collectivity.⁹¹ Charland explains, “this rhetoric of identification is ongoing, not restricted to one hailing ...but usually part of a rhetoric of socialization.”⁹²

As noted in the introduction, “common ground” is established using “identity through antithesis,” where the audience identifies as a unified us through a critique of a unified them⁹³ Hoff Sommers’ narratives are indicative of identity through antithesis as audience members are invited to view their classically liberal values as consubstantial with her own, and opposed to the radical values espoused by gender feminists (who we may now know as modern liberal and radical feminists).

Hoff Sommers’ narratives foster identification through remembrance. In one memory of feminism, Hoff Sommers states: “Credos and intellectual fashions come and go but feminism itself—the pure and wholesome article first displayed at Seneca Falls in 1848—is as American as apple pie, and it will stay.”⁹⁴ Consubstantial with the first wave of American women’s rights struggles, equity feminism represents a realist model of

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Michael C. McGee in C. Corbin, *Rhetoric in Postmodern America: Conversations with Michael Calvin McGee* ed., (New York, NY: Guilford, 1998); Michael Calvin McGee, “In Search of ‘The People’: A Rhetorical Alternative,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 61, (1975): 235–249.

⁹² Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The case of the *People Quebecois*,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73 (1987): 133-150.

⁹³ George Cheney, “The Rhetoric of Identification and the Study of Organizational Communication,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 69 (1983): 143–158.

⁹⁴ Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 275.

social change with very clear, achievable goals that end with changes in the law.

Moreover, Hoff Sommers portrays the suffragist as the exemplar of the classically liberal activist:

The aims of the Seneca Falls activists were clearly stated, finite, and practicable. They would eventually be realized because they were grounded in principles—recognizable constitutional principles—that were squarely in the tradition of equity, fairness, and individual liberty.⁹⁵

In short, the suffragist took the logical path to liberation. In following the principle of positive freedom, she accepted the laws of the state and rationalized her right to vote by establishing herself as a member of a state that constitutionally granted equal rights to all of its citizens.

In contrast, the gender feminist is an enemy to the classically liberal state. Unlike equity feminism, gender feminism has no realistic or measurable end. Hoff Sommers explains that a gender feminist:

learns to identify her personal self with her gender. She sees her relations to men in political terms (“the personal is political”). This “insight” into the nature of male/female relations makes the gender feminist impatient with piecemeal liberal reformist [suffragist] solutions and leads her to strive for a more radical transformation of our society than earlier feminists had envisioned.⁹⁶

A “gender feminist will usually acknowledge that her aims are indeed political” because she accepts “the conviction that American women still live in a patriarchy where men collectively keep women down.”⁹⁷ Gender feminists “see themselves as the second wave of the feminist movement, as the moral vanguard fighting a war to save women.”⁹⁸ Hoff

⁹⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁷ Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 19, 95.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 21.

Sommers states, “I think it’s gotten so ridiculous that you can’t tell the difference between a parody and the real thing.”⁹⁹ The gender feminist is an outlandish and misguided enemy. Through antithesis, Hoff Sommers defines the classically liberal suffragist as a “friend” of the modern day woman. Readers come to identify with the suffragist and the classically liberal ideologies that undergird her activism.

Hoff Sommers’ narratives also foster identification by creating protagonists and antagonists. For example, she casts Susan Faludi and Gloria Steinem as gender feminists. However, both are far less “radical” and separatist than Hoff Sommers would have us believe. Steinem articulates that:

truth-telling and the creation of alternate institutions have begun to delineate and give value to a *woman’s culture*, a set of perspectives that differs from the more traditional, masculine ones, not because of biology but because of the depth of gender conditioning. We need to learn, but so do men. Together we can create a culture that combines the most useful and creative features of each.¹⁰⁰

Steinem’s rhetoric is a fine example of a liberal feminist position that finds the system flawed, but workable. Additionally, Steinem does not appear to suggest that in order to create change women must join with and be loyal only to women, as Hoff Sommers suggests. Rather, she appears to be taking a position startlingly similar to the equity feminist who seeks liberation through equality and fairness and in equal partnership with men. Steinem’s invitation for women and men to join together to change the way we understand gender seems to be very much in line with both equality and fairness. It also

⁹⁹ Hoff Sommers, “The Future of Feminism.”

¹⁰⁰ Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1995): 168-169.

appears to suggest that there is hope for the system, which does not seem to be a very radical position.

Susan Faludi's feminist positions may also be described as more liberal than radical. In fact, Faludi's arguments are in many ways reflective of suffrage arguments from justice, where equality between the sexes takes precedence over other exigencies.

For instance:

Feminism asks the world to recognize at long last that women aren't decorative ornaments, worthy vessels, members of a "special interest group." They are half (in fact now more than half) of the national population, and just as deserving of rights and opportunities, just as capable of participating in the world's events, as the other half. Feminism's agenda is basic: It asks that women not be forced to "choose" between public justice and private happiness. It asks that women be free to define themselves—instead of having their identity defined for them, time and time again, by their culture and their men.¹⁰¹

Despite Hoff Sommers' claim to the contrary, Faludi's definition of feminism seems to celebrate ideologies of individuality common to classic liberalism. Her call for the freedom of self-definition might be read as support for the autonomous individuality of all people, including women.

If Hoff Sommers recognizes Steinem's and Faludi's liberal leanings she mends the problem by exposing them as antagonists who *pretend* to identify with liberal feminism, but fail to espouse classically liberal values:

Steinem, and other current feminist notables ride this First Wave for its popularity and its moral authority, but most of them adhere to a new, more radical, "Second Wave" doctrine The New Feminists claim continuity with the likes of eighteenth-century feminist Mary Wollstonecraft or later feminists like the Grimké sisters, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Harriet Taylor. But those giants of the women's movement grounded their feminist demands on Enlightenment principles of individual justice. By contrast the New Feminists

¹⁰¹ Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, (New York, NY:Three Rivers Press, 2006): 15.

have little faith in the Enlightenment principles that influenced the founders of America's political order and that inspired the great classical feminists to wage their fight for women's rights."¹⁰²

Hoff Sommers' attack on Steinem and company and her resulting memory of feminism reduces the movement to distinct waves, which permits her to identify a "true" first wave feminism and second wave "imposters."

First wave feminism is reduced to the classically liberal feminism adopted by the suffragists and is assigned its heroines (Wollstonecraft, etc.). Their activism is venerated as "appropriate," for "Seneca Falls focused on specific injustices of the kind that social policy could repair by making the laws equitable."¹⁰³ Hoff Sommers explains that:

Stanton's reliance on the Declaration of Independence was not a ploy; it was a direct expression of her own sincere creed, and it was the creed of the assembled men and women. Indeed, it is worth remembering that Seneca Falls was organized by both men and women and that men actively participated and were welcomed."¹⁰⁴

Stanton appears to have an inherent individualistic virtue that guided her to the classically liberal principles of equality found in the Declaration of Independence. Hoff Sommers' implication is that unlike first wave or equity feminists, gender feminists are gender essentialists, unfairly excluding men in the struggle for equality; and disavowing their true nature as individuals by embarking in class politics.

Hoff Sommers' reduction of liberal feminism to the "second wave" deepens the divide between gender feminist activism and the wholesome principles espoused by the suffragists: "Misandrism (hostility to men, the counterpart to misogyny) was not a

¹⁰² Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 22–23.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

notable feature of the women's movement until our own times."¹⁰⁵ Hoff Sommers explains that "the idea that women are in a gender war originated in the midsixties, when the antiwar and antigovernment mood revived and redirected the women's movement away from its Enlightenment liberal ideology to a more radical, antiestablishment philosophy."¹⁰⁶ According to Hoff Sommers, the more "radical" shift toward gender feminism originated in the years following the antiwar movement. She explains that "by the midseventies, faith in liberal solutions to social problems had waned ...;" feminists turned instead to "work seriously on getting women to become aware of the political dimension of their lives."¹⁰⁷ This political shift made way for the modern day gender feminists who "direct their energies toward getting women to join in the common struggle against patriarchy, to view society through the sex/gender prism."¹⁰⁸

In order to legitimate her version of feminism (equity) as the "true" feminism, Hoff Sommers rhetorically collapses the whole of feminism into an ideal of liberal feminism reminiscent of Seneca Falls and the suffrage movement. Hoff Sommers also conflates liberal feminism, which assumes the system is flawed but can change, with radical feminism, or that which assumes the system is both flawed and unworkable. Hoff Sommers urges her readers to work within the current universal social codes to better their individual status, to "act" like reasonable citizens rather than hapless victims.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

True equity feminists are exhorted to embrace a rational form of activism, steeped in Enlightenment principles that will “get them out” of a gynocentric environment. There seems to be no mention of a third wave of feminism or alternative movements that occur throughout each of the waves in Hoff Sommers’ rhetoric.¹⁰⁹ Instead, Hoff Sommers’ narratives construct two feminisms that appear nothing alike. This divide helps to foster identification by portraying modern feminism as antithetical to suffrage. In the following section, I address some of the implications of such a reduction of feminist activism.

Drawing Conclusions: Implications of Equity Feminism

Hoff Sommers juxtaposes equity feminism with the state of feminism in the present, so that the former is portrayed as a venerated representation of a bygone era. In contrast, gender feminism is portrayed as a horrific result of the social reforms of the 1960s. Readers come to understand that it is their duty to honor the women to whom they “owe an incalculable debt.”¹¹⁰ They subsequently come to distinguish “good” activism from “bad.” The return of the venerated suffragist can be viewed as a conservative response to a crisis of feminine identity in the United States where what it means to be a feminist and how a feminist should act are a site of contention.

Hoff Sommers’ memories of second wave feminism as an unorganized, irrational, or even “illegitimate” movement may speak to a very disturbing future for feminism.

Eisenstein explains:

¹⁰⁹ For example, Hoff Sommers makes no mention of Victoria Woodhull who petitioned for the radical notion of free love during the first wave of feminism. She also fails to address black feminist positions or lesbian feminist positions.

¹¹⁰ Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism*, 17.

The women's movement, if it is represented in the main stream media at all, is pictured in terms of disparate interests in their most limited and limiting formulation. This representation misidentifies the radical pluralism that exists within feminism today. It also denies the radical potential that resides here as well. This radical potential may not be actualized any time soon, but it remains a possibility—even if only slightly so. The worst thing we could do is lose sight of the possibility. Then the neoconservatives will have truly won: they will have erased the imaginings that liberal feminism makes possible.¹¹¹

While I agree that the scope of feminism is severely limited when it is reduced to disparate interests (waves), I also recognize that the pluralism of the movement opens feminism to attack. It is easier to undermine an unorganized movement than an established one. Unorganized movements often have competing commitments that at times contradict each other. Certainly, feminism's different politics have been used as proof that it is an illogical movement and that it should not be taken seriously. It takes little effort to render a movement illogical if the movement itself seems unfocused. Hoff Sommers' memories illustrate how the pluralistic qualities of feminism can be used to undermine it. She uses the multiformity of feminism to justify a return to equity feminism "that can lead to a much saner, happier, and more ethical world."¹¹²

As a form of constitutive rhetoric, Hoff Sommers' narratives result in the creation of a collectivity of equity feminists. Hoff Sommers bemoans "victimization" and the notion of identifying as "woman" over "citizen." Further, Hoff Sommers portrays gender feminism as a catalyst for the downfall of education as a United States institution. In contrast, the equity feminist is portrayed as the woman who "got over it" and assimilated

¹¹¹ Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, xv–xvi.

¹¹² Christina Hoff Sommers, "Guest Blog Post: Christina Hoff Sommers on 'What's Wrong and What's Right with Contemporary Feminism?'" *Feminist Law Professors*, January 7, 2009, retrieved March 5, 2009 from <http://feministlawprofs.law.sc.edu/?p=4553>.

into the culture she inhabited, becoming important in and of herself (as a citizen, rather than a woman). Unlike her thick-skinned sister, the gender feminist immerses herself in gender politics, placing far too much importance on her body as a “disability.” Hoff Sommers is correct in suggesting that once an individual recognizes her subjugation, her subject position becomes something other than that of the collectivity. However, if she ignores her otherness and assimilates, is she resolving the issues associated with her subjugation, or ignoring them?

Dow suggests that the answer to this question is perhaps a bit more complex than either/or. In her studies of female representation in popular culture, she finds that “token” women are overwhelmingly more likely to be placed in positions of power.¹¹³ In this case, the woman who achieves the status of the “ideal woman” (sister, mother, daughter) within the public sphere is rewarded with certain civil liberties and becomes a model for other women to emulate. However, her subject position is always realized through her relationships with men. She is written into the public sphere, but is never free of gender constraints. She is the “Other” and her success is related to how well she learns to “play the game.” Equity feminists may inhabit traditionally male spaces; however, their presence in education and organizational institutions represent opportunities, not necessarily liberation. They remain subject to the rules that define them as something other than the ideal male standard. A woman’s gender is always at the fore as she negotiates being feminine without being *too* feminine.

¹¹³ Dow “Hegemony, Feminist Criticism and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*”; Dow, “*Ally McBeal*, Lifestyle Feminism, and the Politics of Personal Happiness.”

Shared memories provide individuals an opportunity to locate themselves within the dominant narrative, thereby becoming accepted members of a collectivity. Especially troubling in this regard is Hoff Sommers' portrayal of the suffragists as ideal representatives of classically liberal "virtues." Liberalism has been widely critiqued throughout academic circles and should cause concern for feminists. Anne Phillips notes:

For many years, the central arguments against liberalism fell into three broad categories: that the liberal emphasis on individual freedoms and rights reflected a self-protective and competitive egotism that refused any wider community; that the liberal focus on "merely" political equalities ignored or even encouraged gross inequalities in social and economic life; and that liberal consolidation of representative democracy reduced the importance of more active citizen participation.¹¹⁴

I would add another criticism to Phillips' list. Liberalism is dependent upon a homogenous population. As a practice that seeks to unite individuals into a larger citizenry, liberalism requires that people "be like" one another and the model for citizenship has historically been the white, bourgeois, male. It cannot be ignored that classically liberal societies are premised upon a masculine and patriarchal order.¹¹⁵ As women enter into the public sphere, they have to negotiate their subject positions as women in order to become autonomous individuals in the male image. Women become equal citizens by adopting masculine traits. There is an intimate relationship between liberalism, masculinity, and citizenship. Hoff Sommers' memories of suffrage offer today's women a classically liberal guide on becoming a good female citizen.

¹¹⁴ Anne Phillips, "Dealing with Difference: A Politics of Ideas or a Politics of Presence?" in Robert E. Goodin and Philip Petit, eds. *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, 2nd ed., (Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2006): 171.

¹¹⁵ Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract."

In the twenty-first century, where citizenship is extended to all legal citizens, we still encounter unequal distributions of power. Some people are, in fact, treated as second-class citizens. The “general will” that classically liberal philosophers so confidently believed would end oppression has worked to establish systematic discrimination through a homogenous standard of citizenship.¹¹⁶ By remembering “authentic” feminists as party to a classically liberal general will—and radical gender feminists as its enemy—Christina Hoff Sommers permits readers to identify as pro-women, even when they may perpetuate harm against women as a group. Citizenship does not eliminate discrimination nor does it equal emancipation. The successes of classically liberal feminism should not be forgotten. Without suffrage, future feminisms would not have been possible. However, classically liberal feminism should also be recognized as a finite and normative form of feminist activism.

¹¹⁶ Iris Marion Young, “Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal Universal Citizenship,” in Robert E. and Phillip Pettit, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, (1989; repr. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 248–263.

Chapter Three

Pinning Down the “New Class” of Feminist Elite: Tammy Bruce’s War Against the Leftist Feminist Establishment

Tammy Bruce is a bestselling author, radio host, columnist and news consultant. Like Christina Hoff Sommers and Dr. Laura, Bruce enjoys a dedicated following of politically minded constituents. She has penned three books and is currently in the process of writing another. Like Schlessinger, Bruce is also the host of a weekly conservative radio program, *The Tammy Bruce Show*, featured on Talk Radio 790 KABC out of Los Angeles. She regularly appears on Fox News as a featured political analyst, and most recently, Bruce’s website was nominated for the 2008 “Weblog Awards” under the category of “Best LGBT Blog.” According to her website, which features a picture of Bruce in a black leather jacket, seductively posed around a microphone with her head leaning against both her hand and the handgun she holds, Bruce identifies as “an openly gay, pro-choice, gun owning, pro-death penalty, voted-for-President Bush authentic feminist.”¹

Bruce’s credentials also extend to the feminist organization NOW (National Organization for Women). For seven years, Bruce served as the Los Angeles Chapter

¹ Tammy Bruce, “Biography,” retrieved February 1, 2009 from <http://tammybruce.com/biography.php>; Tammy Bruce, “The 2008 Weblog Awards,” retrieved February 1, 2009, from http://tammybruce.com/2009/01/the_2008_weblog.php; Tammy Bruce, “Biography.” Retrieved November 1, 2008 from <http://tammybruce.com/biography.php>; Talk Radio KABC “Tammy Bruce,” retrieved February 3, 2009 from <http://www.kabc.com/Article.asp?id=335945>.

president.² Bruce's tenure with NOW ended in 1995 after her disparaging remarks concerning race and the O.J. Simpson trial. During the trial, Bruce was quoted as saying "What we need to teach our children is . . . not about racism, but is about violence against women."³ Additionally, Bruce announced publicly to Simpson, "You are not welcome here, you are not welcome in this country, you are not welcome on our airwaves, you are not welcome in our culture."⁴ This particular statement was perceived by many as a suggestion that Simpson "Go Back to Africa."⁵ Her declaration that the case "needed [a] break from all that talk of racism," led to Bruce's resignation from NOW after an almost unanimous vote to remove her from office.⁶

Following her resignation, Bruce launched a campaign against NOW and what she perceived to be the organization's radical feminist agenda. Like Hoff Sommers, Bruce identifies as a classically liberal feminist and is concerned with the "group identity" that results from the belief in sexual classes (as explained in Chapter Two). Bruce states, "Once we accept the group theory, it becomes not only easier to reject individual rights (such as freedom of expression) but also actually essential that we do

² Tammy Bruce, *The New American Revolution: Using the Power of the Individual to Save our Country from Extremists*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2005); Tammy Bruce, "Biography."

³ National Organization for Women. "Problematic Statements and Angry Responses Statements Made by or Attributed to Tammy Bruce," 1995, retrieved November 14, 2008 from <http://www.now.org/press/12-95/tb-3.html>.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Elaine Lafferty and Elizabeth Gleick, "Fighting Words." *Time Magazine*, January, 1996, retrieved November 9, 2008, from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,983921,00.html?promoid=googlep>.

⁶ Lafferty and Gleick, "Fighting Words."; National Organization for Women, *Problematic Statements*.

so.”⁷ Bruce believes that modern liberal feminism has taken a socialist turn and, as a reflection of her classically liberal commitments, fears that the United States is in danger of losing the ideals of individual liberty and freedom of expression to “leftist” politics.

In this chapter, I expose how Bruce’s application of classically liberal thought expounds on notions of victimhood, group think, and socialism to undermine modern feminist efforts. Bruce’s definition of feminism reduces the movement to a very masculine form of “liberal” feminism and only associates modern liberal feminism with NOW. This adds to a restricted and incomplete memory of feminism in the present. Like Hoff Sommers, Bruce’s reduction of feminism works to reconstitute what most feminists would call liberal feminism as a radical movement. Bruce portrays liberal feminist leaders (specifically NOW’s leaders) as radical activists. I argue that Bruce’s support of “Authentic Feminists” (members of a type of feminism that, according to Bruce, “is rooted in making it possible for people to make the choices that best suit them”) is a normative “feminist” position that embraces classically liberal ideals.⁸

In Chapter Two, I explained that classic liberalism is allied with political conservatism. The alliance is strengthened when aimed against socialism (or the perception of socialist practices).⁹ In this chapter, I continue to explore the relationship between classic liberalism and conservatism, particularly as it has evolved in the “post-Reagan” era. Classically liberal principles provide the foundation for contemporary conservatism in the United States. However, with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the

⁷ Bruce, *The New Thought Police*, 4–5.

⁸ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 29.

⁹ Anthony Quinton, “Conservatism,” *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005): 246–268.

absence of a common enemy, the relationship is strained by a disjuncture between moral (religious) and free-market commitments (which I review later).¹⁰ I point to how conservative political pundits like Bruce use rhetoric to ease this tension and to foster identification between conservative/classically liberal collectivities and individuals. In particular, “authentic feminists” like those analyzed in this dissertation build their case for conservatism by remembering a classically liberal feminism against a contemporary Marxist feminist establishment.

As with Hoff Sommers, Bruce fosters identity through antithesis. In this chapter, I note how she uses identification to motivate individuals to agitate for change. Borrowing from Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification, Foust explains that identity through antithesis (also known as definition-by-negation) “not only defines the ‘friends’ but *moves* individuals to political action, as they passionately identify in struggle.”¹¹ I argue that like Hoff Sommers and Dr. Laura, Bruce’s classically liberal commitments can be viewed as a conservative response to modern feminist activism. They motivate readers to join the battle against “leftist” ideologies (e.g., liberal and radical feminism).

Unlike Hoff Sommers or Dr. Laura, though, Bruce’s minority status as a lesbian provides her a unique position among both classic liberals and conservatives. Bruce is accepted within both constituencies as a “token” minority, but her acceptance is predicated on her belief in the “power of the individual.” For Bruce, individualism is tied to democracy and capitalism, where the individual is responsible for procuring his or her

¹⁰Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969); Christina R. Foust, “Aesthetics as Weapons in the ‘War of Ideas:’ Exploring the Digital and Typographic in American Conservative Web Sites, *Southern Communication Journal*, 73, (2008):122–142.

¹¹ Christina R. Foust, “Aesthetics as Weapons,”128.

own happiness. Bruce's conviction that "personal rights bring personal wealth, personal success, and competition" fits nicely within classically liberal and conservative circles.¹² These circles are able to overlook Bruce's sexuality, or at least tolerate it, and at the same time appear "progressive" by accepting a lesbian as a spokesperson. I articulate how Bruce's unique subject position of "token minority" lends a certain ethos to her narratives that is not apparent in the case of Dr. Laura or Hoff Sommers. I argue that Bruce's minority status allows her to reprimand oppressed populations where other conservative pundits are labeled racist, homophobic, sexist, or otherwise.

In the following section, I detail the relationship between Bruce (as a woman and a lesbian), and her audience. I argue that the relationship between Bruce and her audience is both a unique and fragile one, as her conservative readers grapple with her "feminist" and lesbian identity. Bruce eases this tension through identification, providing what I argue are compromises that allow her readers to view their values as consubstantial to Bruce's. In particular, her classically liberal philosophies eliminate the political and moral gap between Bruce and her readers. As I conclude, Bruce's memories of feminism work within a classically liberal paradigm to motivate her readership to agitate for "change."

Classically Liberal Thought and the New American Individual

"Classical Liberal attitudes are the basis for what has made this nation great," Bruce explains.¹³ She continues: "I stand for the classically liberal concepts of liberty and

¹² Tammy Bruce, *The New Thought Police: Inside the Left's Assault on Free Speech and Free Minds*, (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2003); 14.

¹³ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 76.

individualism.”¹⁴ Bruce ties liberty and individualism into a larger patriotic scheme where the individual citizen becomes the standard for American freedom and democracy. “The American Individual,” Bruce states, “is a Regular Guy with a Special Power.”¹⁵ That power is a “love for freedom and liberty” and for a country which is the “only place on earth where identity is not based in the mass identity of geography.” Instead, the United States is a beacon of “individualist freedom and opportunity.”¹⁶

The concepts of “mass identity” and “individual freedom and opportunity” originate from Bruce’s earlier books, *The New Thought Police: Inside the Left’s Assault on Free Speech and Free Minds* and *The Death of Right and Wrong: Exposing the Left’s Assault on Our Culture and Values*.¹⁷ In *The New Thought Police*, Bruce explains:

The spiral down and away from individual liberty can be traced directly to the rejection of the rights of each person in favor of the rights of the many. This group rights mentality is nothing new; it derives from the “progressive” concept that the individual must submit to what is best for everyone else. This concept however, stems not from the ideal of civil rights, but from the well of socialism, the foundational model for the Far Left.¹⁸

Bruce argues that Americans are losing their individual freedom and opportunity to social justice movements that promote a “mass identity” to protect minority populations from majority oppression. Implicit in Bruce’s argument is a sort of classically liberal memory

¹⁴ Ibid., 34.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷ Tammy Bruce, *The New Thought Police*; Tammy Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong: Exposing the Left’s Assault on Our Culture and Values*, (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2003).

¹⁸ Bruce, *The New Thought Police*, 4.

of the African American Civil Rights and 1960s feminist movements, as guided by the “ideal” of individualism rather than collectivism.

In contrast, Bruce cites the contemporary civil rights and feminist movements as examples of “The New Thought Police” who are “imposing severe sanctions on anyone who espouses an idea or expresses an opinion that might be deemed ‘offensive’ to some favored group.”¹⁹ In particular, Bruce suggests that organizations like NOW conspire against classically liberal principles:

It’s been apparent for years that the American feminist establishment is nothing more than a shill for the shallow leftists in the Democrat party, wrapping themselves in the feminist label for convenience. Groups like NOW and Eleanor Smeal’s Feminist Majority ... use women’s issues as nothing more than slogans and chants in their efforts to gain political power.²⁰

Bruce explains that if modern feminism hopes to help modern women, it must reject socialist principles and fight oppression by embracing autonomous individuality.

She argues that through strength of character, women can find liberation and the satisfaction that comes from being responsible for one’s own successes and failures:

The sense of perpetual victimhood precludes even the concept that the members of a victimized minority could actually rise above their assigned position in society and meet that society on their own terms. To do that would mean taking personal responsibility for the conditions of their own lives; instead, today’s “progressives” have designed an argument that leads not to the encouragement of personal change and growth but to entitlement, group rights, and the eradication of the individual, all in the name of progress.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Tammy Bruce quoted in Lucinda Marshal, “Fox News’ Faux Feminist Attacks Women on the Left Over Muhammad Teddy Bear.” *Alternet.org*, December 4, 2007, retrieved July 15, 2009 from http://www.alternet.org/blogs/peek/69625/fox_news'_faux_feminist_attacks_women_on_the_left_over_muhammad_teddy_bear/.

²¹ Bruce, *The New Thought Police*, 10.

Bruce's memory of feminism is a special type of argument that supports her larger project of bolstering the conservative movement. Bruce's crusade against "the left" uses organizations like NOW as proof that the time for conservatives to take action has arrived. She demonstrates how the left (which includes feminism) promotes theories of victimhood and hopelessness as a means to empower minority populations. "Victimhood," for Bruce, is a weakness—a bane upon society. It limits the possibilities for the individual to flourish. Bruce explains, "The socialist ideal is a false equality premised on the lowest common denominator which encourages the individual to rely on outside help rather than recognize their own potential."²² Her memories of feminism serve as examples for her larger argument that socialist practices alter the course of United States politics and economy.

Bruce's assumption is that individuality is an essential component of capitalism and, likewise, capitalism is an essential component of democracy. She explains that in a classically liberal society "some people are left behind."²³ However regrettable this may be, Bruce explains that it is a necessary concession that allows United States society to thrive. From this paradigm, individual prosperity becomes synonymous with national prosperity. Bruce explains, "Economic freedom, which gave birth to capitalism, is the means by which people become politically free."²⁴ Thus, it becomes the responsibility of

²² Ibid., 14.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 240.

the individual to “better” her or himself by doing her or his best “to participate, giving an honest effort.”²⁵

Bruce’s vision for the contemporary conservative movement draws on Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. In the *Wealth of Nations*, a canon of classical liberal theory, Smith teaches that emphasis on the self is the foremost vehicle of economic prosperity. Writing in 1776, Smith cautioned against state monopolies that stifle economic progress.²⁶ Additionally, Smith argued that the idea of “protectionism,” or the practice of restraining or regulating trade (as opposed to free-trade), maintained economic power relations, protecting the interests of the bourgeoisie at the expense of future economic growth and prosperity.²⁷ Smith believed that an unfettered market led to efficiency through competition. He envisioned an economic system where each individual worker, laborer, or manufacturer would seek to maximize his individual profit by specializing in areas that were most beneficial to the nation.²⁸ Individuals might be motivated to produce for purely selfish reasons (i.e., individual wealth) but the state would prosper in the process. Bruce capitalizes on this tenet of liberal thinking (introduced in Chapter Two): It is the right and duty of the individual to engage in self-improvement, free from governmental interference for the betterment of the state.

²⁵ Ibid., 241.

²⁶ Jonathon B. Wright, “Introduction,” *The Wealth of Nations*, (Hampshire, UK: Harriman House, 2007).

²⁷ Wright, “Introduction.”

²⁸ John Cunningham Wood, *Adam Smith: Critical Assessments, Volume III*, (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 1983): 459; this concept is also known as “comparative advantage” where countries (or regions) can specialize in goods and services that they are best suited to produce.

The “power of the individual” has been the cornerstone of contemporary American conservatism, particularly as advanced by President Ronald Reagan. Bruce adopts Reagan’s conservative platform, especially in regards to his economic policy. Reagan sought to protect the interests of “Big Business” with the assumption that if left to prosper, the rich would create more jobs for the poor. His rhetoric used the strategy of merging classically liberal economic policies with moral traditionalism, where the autonomous individual played a key role in the country’s success. Shogun explains:

Reagan’s stories of everyday citizen heroes emphasized that America’s greatness begins with individuals and their actions. An examination of his presidential rhetoric shows that Reagan used the term “everyday heroes” to describe mothers, African Americans, church leaders, civic volunteers, farmers, police officers, miners, teachers, first ladies, and basketball players. According to Reagan, the contribution of individual Americans made prosperity possible.²⁹

While Reagan’s economic policies were designed to help the rich, it was everyone’s responsibility to stimulate the economy through hard work and individual fortitude—regardless of social class. Understandably, citizens who were not rich, and therefore largely left out of Reagan’s economic plan, found their burden more cumbersome than that of the wealthy. Reagan assuaged their concerns through narratives that fostered identification between the individual (spanning all classes) and his own economic policy:

With his stories and parables, Reagan deliberately targeted listeners as individuals rather than as a collective entity. Reagan spoke directly to each citizen, with the goal that his speeches could change their actions and decisions.³⁰

²⁹ Colleen J. Shogun “Coolidge and Reagan: The Rhetorical Influence of Silent Cal on The Great Communicator,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 9,(2006): 220.

³⁰ Ibid.

Bruce's rhetoric works in a similar fashion, speaking to the individual reader as a potential "American hero." However, like Reagan, she has to negotiate her audience's competing political and religious commitments. American conservatism is marked by a tenuous relationship between cultural conservatives (moral traditionalists) and "free-marketers" (classic liberals).³¹ Free marketers favor the traditions of a limited government, laissez-faire capitalism, and autonomous individuality.³² Cultural conservatives (who I describe more fully in my chapter on Dr. Laura Schlessinger) promote moral traditionalism through Judeo-Christian beliefs and are fiercely anti-socialist/communist. They are also wary of the classically liberal principles of "laissez-faire capitalism and individual freedoms," only supporting the latter if they are grounded in (Judeo-Christian) moral principles.³³

The schism between free-marketers and cultural conservatives requires conservative orators to rhetorically mend the divide.³⁴ Reagan, for example, colored his economic rhetoric with religious undertones in order to unite his audience in a common cause. Shogun explains that Reagan's rhetoric took on a conservative "theme" where voters were told:

the nation's economic situation teetered on the edge of disaster unless citizens repented and reformed. The recovery of the economy depended upon the

³¹ Foust, "Aesthetics as Weapons."

³² Gregory L. Schneider, *Conservatism in America Since 1930: A Reader*. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001).

³³ Foust, "Aesthetics as Weapons," 135.

³⁴ Robert C. Rowland and John Jones, "Entelechial and Reformatory Symbolic Trajectories in Contemporary Conservatism," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 4, (2001).

American people's exhibiting a "quasi-religious faith" in the president's policies and programs.³⁵

Bruce uses comparable strategies to unite her audience in the war against the left.

Through an amalgam of classically liberal economic policies and moral traditionalism, Bruce's conservative memories speak to the individual "American hero" in an effort to mobilize her readers:

The power is now in your hands. The following pages are for ...you and me. They will give you the weapons of information, encouragement, pride and sense of self, so that the future will once again belong to the free, brave, and proud—American style!³⁶

Bruce unites her audience with conservative themes of love and patriotism that define the individual as a member of the newest generation of American freedom fighters. Her memories of a classically liberal America (reminiscent of the Reagan-era) enlighten individuals to their new status and call them to join in the struggle against socialism.

However, Bruce's arguments are hindered by a lack of exigencies (i.e., the Soviet Bloc and Gorbachev). Unlike Reagan, Bruce has no "credible" enemy to rally her audience against. In the absence of a global socialist threat, conservatives like Bruce have turned their focus inward, portraying socialist practices at home as the greatest threat to America. Foust explains that conservatives have defined a "new class" of enemy that is comprised of "well-educated professionals invested in political struggle."³⁷ To combat this new enemy, Foust suggests that conservatives have altered their attack, turning from traditional politics to commercial media in order to "engage the new class in a 'war of

³⁵ Shogun, "Coolidge and Reagan," 223.

³⁶ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 61.

³⁷ Foust, "Aesthetics as Weapons," 122.

ideas:’ a battle for hegemony wherein ‘dissemination and selling of ideas’ in popular media wins converts and achieves policy goals.”³⁸ Unlike their conservative predecessors, contemporary conservatives are less concerned with socialist nation-states than they are with the everyday “socialist” practices of the average citizen. Through television, online media (e.g., *Fox News*, *FrontPageMagazine.com*, both of which Tammy Bruce contributes to), and a flourishing book business, conservatives charge the new class with elitism.³⁹ They “out” the “leftist elite” by exposing its “socialist” leanings and leadership.

Bruce’s critique of the “Feminist Elite” for example, uses Gloria Steinem as a model of feminism’s socialist politics:

Of course, Steinem is a socialist, so her primary concern is not with the quality of women’s lives at all. She apparently is still awash in how awful this country and the “patriarchy” really are.⁴⁰

Figures like Steinem serve as examples of the socialist infiltration of modern organizations and provide the exigency for conservative action. Conservative narratives frame the individual as the answer to the socialist usurpation of American values. To combat the feminist elite, Bruce introduces her audience to the “New American Individual” (NAI). According to Bruce, the NAI strives to break free of group theory (socialism) that “crushes individual spirit, personal hope, dreams and progress by eliminating the reward and excitement of rising above the crowd.”⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid., 122-123.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong*, 83.

⁴¹ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 84.

Bruce defines the NAI as the ideal standard of autonomous individuality. In an almost Kantian fashion, Bruce describes the process of becoming an NAI as an awakening or enlightenment (I mention Kant's view on Enlightenment in Chapter Two). Bruce states that the "The New American Revolution is the individual waking up from the cultural and political coma the Left so carefully cooked up. It is the intensely personal realization that if we continue to play the games of American Leftist extremists, there will be no future for our children."⁴² Bruce explains that NAIs become "the stewards of an idea rooted in individualist freedom and opportunity."⁴³ She offers her audience examples of NAIs, portraying conservative political pundit David Horowitz as a "cultural hero writer" and President George W. Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the entire Cheney family, and Colorado Congressmen Tom Tancredo as individuals who all "work to make this nation all it can be."⁴⁴ In this sense, Bruce identifies the NAI's "friends" and uses their virtues of personal responsibility, individual empowerment, and patriotism, as a template for future NAIs to follow.

In contrast to the NAI is the "Leftist."⁴⁵ Bruce juxtaposes these two subject positions using examples of multiculturalism as a means of associating Leftist behavior with socialism, Marxism, and even Fascism. This juxtaposition often results in the portrayal of the NAI as strong and independent, "hopeful" and "optimistic."⁴⁶ In contrast,

⁴² Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 7.; Bruce *The New American Revolution*, 5-6.

⁴³ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

Leftists lack strength of character. “They’re losing not only because they’re depraved,” Bruce states, “but because Americans once again have proven that we will not be brainwashed or bullied into a silent cowardice.”⁴⁷ Bruce argues that as a result of a lack of individual courage and moral fiber, Leftists are forced to rely on victimhood and pity to enhance their social status. Where leftist strategies rely on collectivism as an organizing tool for society, Bruce’s conservative strategy relies on a “collection” of individualism where individual fortitude strengthens the state.

It is interesting to note that Bruce portrays leftists as “leftist activists” who are hypnotized by ideology or who are brainwashed by socialist practices: “In my first two books, *The New Thought Police (NTP)* and *The Death of Right and Wrong (DRW)*, I chronicle our successful brainwashing by the American Left.”⁴⁸ The portrayal of the leftists-as-activist widens the divide between the NAI and the leftist elite. “Activist” is used as an epithet that describes the leftist as ungrateful, selfish, and “whiny;” a member of a community whose subversive strategies are dangerous to the “rest of” society. The Left is equated with activism because it takes Americans away from the ideals they should embrace.

Conservatives, on the other hand, are not activists (even though Bruce refers to her ideas of individualism as a “revolution”) because they are not seeking to revolutionize politics. They are simply “taking America back” to its traditional and foundational beliefs:

⁴⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 4,5.

Despite an unprecedented attack on this nation by our Leftist enemies—both within and outside the country ...we are taking this nation back. We are taking it back from the nihilistic Leftists who work feverishly to erase God from the public square, perpetuate the isolationist failure of multiculturalism, and further the death of right and wrong.⁴⁹

Bruce explains to her readers that today's NAI is a "straight, White, Christian man or woman who holds traditional values, worries about the future of his or her children and works hard for a living."⁵⁰ She expresses that these values are under attack and reinforces the NAI as the dominant model of the citizen subject and virtual protector of life—as it should be—in the United States. She fosters identification by revealing how the values of the NAI are one and the same with the values of "each" individual reader: "It's fascinating to contemplate ...*you* are the New Radical Individual."⁵¹

Bruce also uses herself as an example of the NAI. She intimately details how her service within the "Leftist Establishment" led her to an ideological conversion. She explains how she morphed from a "pathetic" follower into an individual who ultimately became responsible for her own destiny. This conversion assumes a new state of Being for Bruce, one that can be similarly achieved by her constituents if they simply accept their inherent power as individuals. "You learn a great deal about yourself working where you have no one else to blame," she states.⁵² "I now own the success and failure of my work and my personal behavior. I now understand the personal power of *owning why I*

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 35.

⁵¹ Bruce uses the term "Radical" in place of "American" in some of her books and articles. Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 38.

⁵² Ibid., 43.

think what I think.”⁵³ It is this power, this individual freedom that Bruce impels the NAI to embrace.

Bruce’s testament to the “NAI way of life” is reflective of the classically liberal belief that through observation, other individuals can learn to embrace liberty. In Chapter Two I explained that classically liberal philosophers believed that autonomous individuality could be cultivated through an educational system that taught individuals the virtues of a classically liberal society.⁵⁴ They also believed that certain “token” individuals (what Rousseau would call “official censors”), or those who exemplified the “liberated individual,” could serve as examples for others to follow. Wolff explains, “In essence, the job of the censor [token] is to ridicule, and so discourage, certain forms of anti-social behavior.”⁵⁵ Classically liberal philosophers hoped that through observation and replication, other members of society would realize their potential as autonomous individuals. Using John Stuart Mill to describe censorship, Wolff states:

Mill’s idea is that human progress is best served by giving individuals the licence to engage in “experiments of living.” Those who take up this opportunity may well conduct “successful” experiments, and so arrive at styles of life which others can choose to follow. In other words, role models can show others how to live (or not to live) their own lives, and from these role models, the less creative can take up various new possibilities for themselves.⁵⁶

The NAI is a role model who encourages classically liberal virtues in an effort to counter the left’s unwholesome social influence. Bruce serves as a token NAI, a minority

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Wolff, *Introduction to Political Philosophy*.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 123.

(lesbian) role model who can demonstrate the benefits of individualism to less creative minorities.

For well over a century, the idea that the United States is an open society that disregards privileges of birth, race, or class has served as a foundational cultural myth. Yet as Cloud explains, “Rooted in the Protestant ethic and popularized in novels and self-help literature, the success of the myth is continually belied by the realities of class, race, and gender stratification in capitalist society.”⁵⁷ Many biographies and autobiographies capitalize on the myth by appropriating the “life-story” of individuals who have “risen above” personal obstacles. Cloud suggests that these narratives (which she terms “tokenist biographies”) “authorize a person from a marginalized or oppressed group to speak as a cultural hero *on the condition* that the person’s life story is framed in liberal-capitalist terms.”⁵⁸ Token auto/biographies reinforce the myth of the American Dream “through the invention of the classical self who is the hero of the story, which is presented as ‘true.’”⁵⁹ A “token” is a person whose ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, etc. threatens the dominant bloc, but who, despite these obstacles, has become successful in her or his own right. The token serves as the “exception to the rule” while also proving that society’s rules (in this case, the rules of classic liberalism) are not responsible for oppression. Rather, the oppressed simply have not tried hard enough to rise above their assigned social positions. Bruce serves as a token example of how a lesbian woman can

⁵⁷ Dana L. Cloud, “Hegemony or Concordance? The Rhetoric of Tokenism in “Oprah” Winfrey’s Rags-to-Riches Biography, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 13, (1996):116.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 119.

succeed in the United States, and her use of personal experience in her rhetoric is akin to token autobiography.

I argue that Bruce portrays herself as a “cultural hero” that may still censor minority populations. Bruce’s disavowal of both the gay rights and feminist movements cast her as “proof” that a lesbian can succeed in the United States—that the system is not flawed and does not discriminate—and situates her success in classically liberal and capitalist terms. This fosters identification between Bruce and her readers, as they are invited to share in her story and to identify with her individual struggle and subsequent success. She states, “Many of you, I’ve learned, are indeed like me—a minority, or someone who lives on the margin of society, who considers the politics of the Left to be rubbish.”⁶⁰ She reaches out to the individual reader, be they gay or straight, man or woman, demonstrating how “alike” they really are.

Bruce bares herself to her audience with a conversion story. In the introduction to *The Death of Right and Wrong*, Bruce recounts a dinner she had with Dr. Laura (Bruce and Dr. Laura developed a close relationship as radio hosts in Los Angeles). During this dinner, Bruce recounts:

“Nothing is what it seems,” I brazenly offered. One thing I knew, I said, was that “people lead one life in public and another in private.” This, you see, is what I had learned from my life experience ... Laura, on the other hand, *is* who she is. There is no strange underworld in the life of Laura Schlessinger. What you see is what you get. She asked me why I believed what I did. She also asked me about my newly expressed interest in issues of morality. I then told her the story I am about to tell you ... Shocked by this story—which I had never told before ... Laura said that I would need to be completely honest about my life if I was going to write a book calling the powerful on the carpet for being hypocrites and twisting issues of morality. If I didn’t, she warned, I would be nothing more than a hypocrite myself. Laura appreciated the insight I had gained as I got older about the

⁶⁰ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 37.

necessity of values, and she counseled me to make sure you knew how it came about.⁶¹

Bruce continues the narrative, describing her first lesbian relationship with actress Brenda Benét. Benét, a thirty something, publicly heterosexual adult, instructed a 17 year-old Bruce to keep the relationship closeted. Bruce explains, “She wanted what she wanted, but she also needed to hide the relationship in order to maintain the image she created for her friends, and most importantly, her colleagues and fans. I realize now that this was the message conveyed to my teenage mind: You must not let personal responsibility, let alone morality get in the way of what you want.”⁶² Bruce explains that she would carry this mantra with her into adulthood and articulates that her lack of morality was a “quality” appreciated by NOW’s leadership.

The relationship ended horrifically, with Benét committing suicide. According to Bruce, she arrived at Benét’s home for a lunch date, found Benét locked in a bathroom, pleaded for her to come out and then went for help. Upon leaving the house, she heard a gunshot. Bruce states, “In the years that followed, my entire focus was on *me*—what I wanted ... there were no moral standards in my life.”⁶³ She goes on to explain her subsequent promiscuity and drug habit, stating:

if it felt good, I did it ... It was this self-absorption that facilitated a view of myself as Victim. With narcissism running wild, everything bad that happened to me happened because I was a woman, or because I was gay. After all, if I wasn’t responsible for the things that happened in my life (especially the bad things), then someone else had to be.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong*, 1–2.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Bruce explains how this self-absorption led to her involvement in leftist politics:

This mind-set, and the emotional and psychological damage I had suffered, made me a perfect foot soldier for the organized Left because of their romanticization of Victimhood and promises of empowerment.⁶⁵

Bruce's narrative has important implications for her construction of feminism. Her personal tragedy and the mental trauma she endured (that made her the perfect leftist foot soldier) serve as evidence that feminists are mentally troubled rather than legitimate activists. Bruce, explains that she "awoke" from feminism's fog when she sought psychological help. "It was that personal progress, I believe, that kept me from getting completely sucked into the relativism and hypocrisy I saw in the actions and agenda of other leaders in both the feminist and gay movements."⁶⁶

Bruce eventually found "moral clarity" and achieved personal success (although, by all accounts, Bruce was already successful during her time in the "Leftist Establishment"). Cloud explains that through hegemony, tokenism, and star personae (I would argue that Bruce holds some level of star personae, especially for her fans) autobiographical narratives "recuperate and neutralize these histories [history of minority oppression] in the liberal discourse of individual success."⁶⁷ The token is seen to "rise above" or "get over" her or his minority status. She or he "overcomes" the oppression. However, this "bootstrap" narrative works to maintain hegemony by presenting the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong*, 5.

⁶⁷ Cloud, "Hegemony or Concordance," 117.

facade of compromise.⁶⁸ Successful token narratives promote a certain amount of deviance, but ultimately promote the taken-for-granted values of the dominant bloc. As an example, Bruce explains “I do not identify as Christian, and yet it is impossible for any American who is honest with himself not to recognize that it is Christian values that have made our lives worth living.”⁶⁹ She at once highlights her “out-group” status while simultaneously reinforcing the Christian values of the dominant bloc.

The dominant bloc can only allow for limited resistance if it is to maintain stability. Values of capitalism, liberalism, Christianity and others are always contested.⁷⁰ Therefore, social stability is predicated on the ability of the dominant bloc to appropriate out-group challenges. The opposing values promulgated by the token narrative are reframed in a way that permits minority participation, but only to a degree that does not significantly challenge the values of the dominant bloc. A token narrative is one that acknowledges the oppression of minority populations, “but redefines oppression as personal suffering and success as individual accomplishment.”⁷¹ When writing about her life as a lesbian, Bruce explains, “Being able to be honest about myself has led me to a level of comfort about who I am ... I am indeed a minority and even live a socially marginal life because of my choices.”⁷² Bruce articulates that homosexuality is perfectly

⁶⁸ I use Cloud’s definition of hegemony which defines as “the process by which a social order remains stable by generating consent to its parameters through the production and distribution of ideological texts that define social reality for the majority of the people.” Cloud, “Hegemony or Concordance,” 117.

⁶⁹ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 28.

⁷⁰ Cloud, “Hegemony or Concordance.”

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁷² Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 232.

natural, but describes her sexuality as a choice. She details how she made the decision to be a lesbian, explaining that her sexuality is a personal preference and that she accepts the challenges that come with her “behavior.”⁷³ She expresses that she has become the successful individual that she is as a result of making rational decisions and moving beyond her sexuality: “I now understand that true individualism requires accepting oneself, no matter how divergent our choices, as long as they are reasonable choices.”⁷⁴

Bruce is measuring her success in terms of Rousseau’s “positive freedom” (a concept I introduced in Chapter Two) where freedom is defined as “living the life the rational person would choose to live.”⁷⁵ Classically liberal philosophers cautioned that freedom was “not simply a matter of being able to follow your desires, unconstrained by others,” which would be akin to slavery (as in slavery to one’s desires).⁷⁶ Rather, freedom is found in obedience to civil society’s laws.⁷⁷ Bruce demonstrates how, unlike the leftist gay activist, she is not a “slave” to her sexuality. She has chosen freedom in making rational choices that serve the interests of state (i.e., she does not let her “deviant” desires threaten a homogenous society—she “controls” her desires, so to speak).

As aforementioned, token narratives serve as exceptions to the rule. Cloud explains that as readers come to terms with the out-group status of the narrator, they begin to identify with the narrator as hero, placing themselves in the narrator’s role.

⁷³ Ibid., 230–235.

⁷⁴ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 232.

⁷⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, ed. G.D.H Cole, J.H. Brumfit, and John C. Hall (London, UK: Everyman, 1973): 196, quoted in Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, 87.

⁷⁶ Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, 87.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Bruce tells her heterosexual readers, “For many of you, I may be the only lesbian you know. I think for most of you I represent the one gay person whom you feel you can safely ask questions and get honest answers.”⁷⁸ As readers come to view Bruce as an exceptional, and therefore a “safe” lesbian, they come to identify with her. Bruce becomes the “hero” of the story (for both mainstream and out-group readers) and additionally readers can see themselves in Bruce’s situation.⁷⁹ Token narratives almost always detail the extreme suffering that minority populations face, but suffering is only used as a means to showcase how strength and hard work brought the individual out of the “pits of despair” and into the throws of success.

In Bruce’s case, the reader may be repulsed by her sexuality, but she or he can reframe Bruce’s sexuality into a category of “personal suffering.” When “sexuality” is reduced to the more general category of “suffering,” even the heterosexual Christian can identify with Bruce’s struggle, and more importantly, how she rises above it. Where Bruce does not complain about the discrimination she endures as a female or as a lesbian, her readers may see that they should not complain about discrimination that derives from their class status, race, or ethnicity. Where discrimination could keep Bruce down, the reader sees that it does not, and likewise comes to understand that a capitalist and classically liberal society is not oppressive, but opportunistic. Through identification with the narrative’s hero, readers learn that anything is possible for anyone. However, the token has achieved success *because* she has followed the rules of a classically liberal

⁷⁸ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 231.

⁷⁹ Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press: 1973): Foust, “Aesthetics as Weapons.”

society. Society has not changed; it has simply allowed a space for the token to operate. Therefore, Bruce's narratives work to build consubstantiality with her readers in a "do as I do" fashion. At the same time, however, the power relations that uphold discrimination remain unchanged.

In addition to maintaining power structures, Bruce's narratives also allow her to assume the role of "censor." As a member of the out-group, she reprimands those who have not assumed their social responsibilities as NAIs:

So you're "gay"? Well, fine, now move on. Of course, those of us who are not victims do move on, but in order to eschew personal responsibility, those who are "victims" must be lost in a group.⁸⁰

"Groups of individuals" are friends of the state who identify as minorities but embrace classically liberal individualism to carve a space in mainstream society. Group consciousness, on the other hand, or the idea of identifying as part of a subjugated group, is a socialist ideology that unfairly critiques the virtue of the state. Group consciousness renders the "victim" an enemy who at once undermines the state while at the same time burdens it with his or her weaknesses.

In appropriating Bruce's narratives, conservative readers are able to reprimand (and discriminate against) minority populations without seeming to do so—Bruce is doing it for them. In the following section, I use Bruce's concept of the Feminist Elite as an example. Through an analysis of Bruce's framework of modern feminism, I expose how she is able to censor feminist practices using her personal example of success to prove how preposterous notions of female oppression have become. I argue that in acting as a token censor, she frames feminism as an elitist, socialist, and radical movement that

⁸⁰ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 64.

alienates the “majority.” The analysis reveals how Bruce renders all feminisms (with the exception of her version of authentic “feminism”) as a single, anti-establishment, separatist movement.

NOW, Liberal Feminism, and the Authentic Feminist

Bruce’s framework of modern feminism is entirely predicated on the actions, history, and leadership of NOW (which she also refers to as “Establishment Feminists” or the “feminist establishment”). Consequently, feminist activism becomes synonymous with NOW’s feminist agenda. While NOW can be considered a liberal feminist organization, it does not represent all feminists. When a social movement is reduced to a single organization, the actions, policies and leadership of that organization can come to represent the movement in its entirety. The movement is “pinned down,” so to speak, and any critique of the organization becomes a critique of the movement. Bruce provides her readers with a grossly reduced version of feminist activism in the United States. NOW serves as a convenient target to unite against:

For the Feminist Elite ... generating money for the Leftist machine eclipses bringing in money to actually make a difference on the issues. Like Leftists everywhere, they are out only for themselves. The issues they tout are mere slogans.⁸¹

Bruce further develops the idea of a nefarious Feminist Elite by associating NOW with gender essentialism. She argues that NOW promotes reverse sexual discrimination: “The feminist ghetto does not allow for a great deal of mixing, and certainly the ‘enemy’ [men] was never welcomed.”⁸²

⁸¹ Ibid., 185.

⁸² Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong*, 22.

Bruce explains to her readers, “I always felt that for feminism to work, men had to be brought along and the effort had to be truly nonpartisan.”⁸³ But Bruce feels NOW has left men behind: “The past is when NOW’s leadership was actually feminist ... The organization ... as it was in the late 1960s and through the 1970s, was driven by a Statement of Purpose that has actually been *disowned* by the current gang ...”⁸⁴

The portion of the 1966 Statement of Purpose that Bruce claims has been disowned is the paragraph that reads:

The purpose of NOW is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.⁸⁵

Bruce claims that NOW is no longer dedicated to a partnership with men (It should be noted that NOW’s current Statement of Purpose specifically mentions the idea of equality between the sexes).⁸⁶

Rather, she explains that being a member of NOW in the modern era means, “laying low, and not enlisting men in the struggle for women’s rights.”⁸⁷ Bruce buttresses this portrayal with a vilification of NOW’s history and its leaders:

In order to attract as wide a base as possible, the sixties Leftists hid their socialist sympathies and, in some cases, actual Communist Party membership. Betty

⁸³ Bruce, *The New Thought Police*, 119.

⁸⁴ Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong*, 68.

⁸⁵ 1966 Purpose Statement for The National Organization for Women, quoted in Tammy Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong*, 69.

⁸⁶ NOW’s current statement of purpose reads: “NOW is the largest, most comprehensive feminist advocacy group in the United States. Our purpose is to take action to bring women into full participation in society—sharing equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities with men, while living free from discrimination.” National Organization for Women, “About NOW,” retrieved July 17, 2009 from <http://www.now.org/about.html>.

⁸⁷ Bruce, *The New Thought Police*, 121.

Friedan is a classic case. In the book that launched the modern feminist movement—*The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963—she portrayed herself as a politically inactive housewife who simply had had enough of sexism.⁸⁸

However, in 2006, Friedan revealed her Communist leanings in her memoir *Life So Far*.⁸⁹ Bruce explains, “Friedan’s revelation that, while she may have been a bored and frustrated housewife, she had also been a member of the Communist Party, shed some much-needed light on how left-wing politics has been masquerading as authentic feminism.”⁹⁰

Interestingly, Bruce’s critique of Friedan’s politics is one of her only memories that portray the “old” or “original” NOW as a defunct organization (note that she stands by the 1966 Statement of Purpose). For the most part, Bruce argues that NOW *was* an honorable organization that has been hijacked by ideologues: “Some think NOW’s disintegration into a cabal of so-called feminist against men, religion, and progress is a return to the past. On the contrary. The past is when NOW’s leadership was actually feminist.”⁹¹ It is important for Bruce to distinguish between the NOW of the past and the NOW of the present because her notion of authentic feminism is predicated on the classically liberal beliefs of the “old NOW.” As I elaborate below, the “old NOW” shares such classically liberal principles as procuring equal rights (including rights to reproduction) and material opportunities for women (as citizens of the state).

⁸⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁹ Betty Friedan, *Life So Far*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

⁹⁰ Bruce, *The New Thought Police*.

⁹¹ Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong*, 68.

Thus, the majority of Bruce's critique of NOW is dedicated to the last 15 years of the organization's activism and leadership:

Do not be mistaken: what Gloria Steinem, Molly Yard, Patricia Ireland and all the rest have presented to you over the last 15 years (at least) has not been feminist theory ... Steinem's influence, combined with the socialist sympathies of NOW's immediate past-president, Patricia Ireland, explain the co-opting of NOW by leftist ideologues.⁹²

Like other conservative narrators, Bruce has honed her attack to expose a "new class;" but while others have concentrated on academics and journalists, Bruce targets the "feminist elite." Attacks on feminism's "socialist" leaders allow Bruce to frame liberal feminism in "radical" terms. Her portrayal of past feminist leaders as socialists and current agendas as gender essentialist works as a means of "lifting the fog" for her audience. They are awakened from the hypnosis of the well-educated and articulate leftists that have "duped" them for so long. Bruce bridges the gap between her moral conservative and classically liberal audiences and unites them against the common enemy—a liberal-radical feminism, epitomized by NOW. For the moral conservative, feminism lacks moral principles, contributing to "the death of right and wrong."⁹³ For the classic liberal, feminism represents a socialist threat and panders to group theories of victimhood that jeopardize national prosperity.

I think it is fair to say that NOW is perhaps the best known *liberal* feminist organization. NOW pledges "to take action to bring women into full participation in society—sharing equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities with men, while living

⁹² Bruce, *The New Thought Police*, 124.

⁹³ I am referring to the title of Bruce's book *The Death of Right and Wrong*.

free from discrimination.”⁹⁴ NOW lists as its top six priorities, “advancing reproductive freedom; stopping violence against women; winning lesbian rights; achieving constitutional equality; and ensuring economic justice.”⁹⁵ These goals are indicative of liberal feminist activism which seeks to bring women into society with equal participation with men. Based on the values of classic liberalism identified in Chapter Two, NOW can be considered a liberal organization because they are promoting individual rights and recognition under the laws of the state. NOW supports the advancement of women as individuals (both legally and materially), allowing women to be more productive and autonomous citizens. Yet while NOW is dedicated to a moderate and liberal agenda, it is often portrayed by dissenters like Bruce as a radical feminist organization.

Unlike liberal feminism, radical feminism grew out of the social outrage over the Vietnam War and civil rights. Finding little reprieve from patriarchal oppression in social activist groups, radical feminists splintered from other social justice movements in an effort to inspire social reform at all levels. Radical feminists argued that the oppression of women was the foundation for all forms of oppression. Their tactics were revolutionary in that they refused to accept traditional forms of communication. Instead, radical feminists developed what has come to be known as “consciousness-raising,” forming leaderless groups with no set agendas and engaging in theatrical public displays.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ National Organization for Women, “About NOW,” retrieved February 6, 2009 from <http://www.now.org/about.html>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Charlotte G. O’Kelly, *Women and Men in Society*, 2nd ed., (Florence, KY: Wadsworth Publishing, 1985).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the “outrageous” tactics of radical feminism often drew more media attention than that of other feminist activism. Radical feminism became the face of all feminism, encompassing very different forms of activism, including liberal feminism. During the 1968 Miss America Pageant, for example, feminists gathered outside the Atlantic City Convention Center and engaged in one of the most iconic displays of feminist protest—the infamous, and grossly exaggerated, “bra burning:”

At the center of it all, and attracting the most media attention, was the “Freedom Trash Can”—a receptacle where women would toss items such as dish detergent, false eyelashes, wigs, curlers, copies of magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* and *Playboy*, high heels, and girdles. They also threw bras into the can.⁹⁷

The trash can, it should be noted, was never set on fire and thus, despite popular myth, no bras were burned. However, this type of separatist activism became the face of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Liberal feminists engaged in less separatist activism, often looking to repair the system through constitutional projects like the Equal Rights Amendment.

Despite the fact that most feminists eventually ensconced themselves in liberal feminism, the tendency to label all feminism as radical remained. This trend continues today as dissenters of feminism situate the movement historically in the 1960s and 1970s and use terms like liberal and radical synonymously to disavow all feminist activism as outrageous or illogical. Bruce does so by pointing to NOW’s support of some cultural and radical feminist activism:

Penn State’s “feminists” put together a program titled “Cuntfest,” sponsored by Womyn’s Concerns and Ellie Smeal’s campus outreach effort, the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance ... There is a twisted war being waged on campus

⁹⁷ Public Broadcasting System, “People & Events: The 1968 Protest,” *American Experience*, retrieved May 27, 2009 from http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/missamerica/peopleevents/e_feminists.html.

when a woman giving a speech about individual empowerment has to flee for her safety out the back door, while those who degrade and objectify women in the name of feminism prosper—and on the students’ and taxpayers dime. This is not a legacy of which the Left should be proud.⁹⁸

Where NOW engages in many forms of liberal feminist activism (registering women and minorities to vote, fighting for reproductive rights, providing assistance for women in abusive relationships, awareness for sexual harassment, rape, and assault, etc.), Bruce chooses to portray “outrageous” forms of activism as the only type of activism the organization (and the movement it represents) undertakes. Bruce remembers and represents all feminist activism as working against men and objectifying women, but with one exception: authentic feminism.

The authentic feminist is an important character in Bruce’s narratives because she represents the antithesis of radical-liberal feminists (the enemy). Bruce nurtures a relationship between her readers and the authentic feminist (the friend) that helps her audience identify with the classically liberal virtues of authentic feminism. In particular, Bruce encourages her readers to become authentic feminists by recognizing their power as individuals and joining in the struggle against the Feminist Establishment. An authentic feminist is an NAI who promotes capitalism and democracy through classically liberal feminist activism. Bruce explains that when the authentic feminist accepts her responsibility as an individual, she will escape the left’s doldrums:

I know what it’s like finally to be completely in charge of my opinions, my actions and the choices I make. I no longer worry about whether or not Eleanor Smeal will like what I’m thinking or doing, or what I can do to please the national

⁹⁸ Bruce, *The New Thought Police*, 219.

leadership of NOW, or the Gay Pooh-Bahs in Los Angeles or New York. It is extraordinary to answer only to myself.⁹⁹

Bruce admits that her turn toward classic liberalism, and thus her creation of the authentic feminist, began in the 1990s when her disillusionment with NOW reached its pinnacle. Bruce explains that she was reduced to a “head-bobbing doggy” who blindly accepted the organization’s “Leftist” brainwashing.¹⁰⁰ After resigning her post as the Los Angeles chapter President, Bruce began her crusade to expose the “Malignant Narcissism” that had reduced United States citizens to embracing socialism in the form of “entitlements, handouts, and humiliation,” as encouraged by NOW.¹⁰¹ As evidenced in her reference to the “cadre of damaged and powerful individuals” who lead feminism and other leftist movements, she portrays feminism as a movement that threatens the prosperity of the United States and is in direct conflict with classically liberal virtues.¹⁰² This rhetorical construction presents readers with only two options with which to identify: authentic feminist or radical feminist (which most feminist scholars would classify as moderate, liberal feminists). The reader’s choice is directed by a narrative that casts the authentic feminist as hero and the liberal feminist as villain.

Bruce also directs the “flow” of feminist history, portraying the movement as far more separatist than it really is: “The legacy of the modern feminist movement has been one of exploitation and abandonment ... Have there been occasional successes?”

⁹⁹ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 65.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 29.

Absolutely.”¹⁰³ She finds some of the 1960s and 1970s to be good feminism, but only insofar as they expanded individual (women’s) rights. Others have been “dangerous” (i.e., socialist) or illogical:

The inability of these organizations (and I use the term lightly these days) to respond to reality is comparable to someone driving around in 2005 with an eight-track tape player wondering why no one wants to listen to her copy of Helen Reddy’s “I am Woman.”¹⁰⁴

In a mocking fashion, Bruce encourages her readers to scorn the “silly” politics of modern feminism. She builds identification with her readers against a new class that is embarrassingly out of touch with women’s needs. Her “history” of feminism is a rejection of women’s oppression as promulgated by the Feminist Establishment. Her readers are encouraged to internalize women’s oppression (after all, for Bruce, if not for Hoff Sommers, oppression is a personal struggle) and create their own understanding of liberation free from the authority of NOW’s leadership.

All memories strategically “forget” and alter past events.¹⁰⁵ They are also a powerful mobilizing force that legitimizes social movement.¹⁰⁶ Given these qualities of collective memory, redefining liberal feminism as radical and illogical while limiting her critique of the movement through a thorough condemnation of NOW’s most prominent members may be quite strategic for Bruce. If her readers see a connection between Bruce and modern feminism, they may not be as likely to view liberal feminism as the threat

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 184.

¹⁰⁵ Ali Behdad, *A Forgetful Nation: On Immigration and Cultural Identity in the United States*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁶ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994): 67.

Bruce suggests that it is. More importantly, they may not view Bruce's arguments as authentic. Remembering feminism as she does also allows Bruce (and other classical liberals and conservatives who identify with her) to redefine and discipline current social attitudes.

In Chapter One, it was suggested that cultural narratives are embedded with taken-for-granted "realities" that form the shared experiences found in everyday living. The taken-for-granted reality that guides Bruce's rhetoric is the notion that capitalism is inherently good and necessary for democracy to flourish. Moreover, any introduction of socialist practices (or activities that she describes as socialist) in the experience of everyday life represents a distinct threat to the "American way of life." Each of these concepts (capitalism, democracy, American way of life) follow fairly static cultural narratives associated with classic liberalism, where leftist strategies represent a threat to the individual's autonomy and agency—and thus, society itself. Bruce goes to great lengths to expose NOW's/feminism's socialist leanings. She argues that NOW/feminism is obsessed with victimhood that results in "individual freethinkers [being] tranquilized with threats and fabricated guilt into accepting a monumental lie."¹⁰⁷ It is the threat of "leftist" feminism that she urges her reader to unite against.

Bruce is able to portray modern feminism as an "anti-American" establishment with a long history of socialist tendencies. Bruce's rhetoric also reveals the nostalgic undertones that create a memory of a "Golden Age" reminiscent of the Reagan era. Listeners are urged to feel unsatisfied with their current state or to feel threatened by a perceived takeover of a new collective "Order." Bruce's narratives are textual models of

¹⁰⁷ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 103.

collective consciousness, constituting a classically liberal community through selective remembering of feminism.

Conclusions and Implications

Given the examples used throughout this chapter, Bruce may be described as a power feminist. Power feminism, originated in the 1990s as a reaction to the “victimage” underscoring some second wave activism.¹⁰⁸ Rather than addressing women as the victims of patriarchal oppression, power feminism seeks to “empower” women by urging them to become responsible for their own successes and failures, including those occurring in traditionally male activities (e.g., work, sports, politics). Power feminists generally agree that women should avoid psychological behaviors rooted in victimhood/powerlessness and instead embrace the power they do have, such as the power to elect public officials and the economic power to purchase and consume.

Tammy Bruce ardently believes that feminism should be dedicated to protecting women from violence, sexual abuse and rape, harassment, the suppression of sexual freedom; and to further guarantee the right for women to control their bodies’ reproductive capabilities. However, she also firmly believes that feminism hurts women by promoting victimhood. Bruce explains, “When your victimhood is your empowerment, recovery is the *enemy*, and working on ‘individual change’ becomes counterproductive, even dangerous to your identity.”¹⁰⁹ Bruce reasons that empowerment is located within the individual and in order to overcome your victimhood, you have to

¹⁰⁸ Michaela D. E. Meyer, “Women Speak(ing): Forty Years of Feminist Contributions to Rhetoric and an Agenda for Feminist Rhetorical Studies,” *Communication Quarterly*, 55, (2007): 1–17.

¹⁰⁹ Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong*, 29.

“get over” being a victim. Bruce explains that feminism does not allow women to do that because the movement always frames women as helpless. Further, “when the group maintains the victimhood of the individual ...something even more sinister starts to happen: the subconscious transference of the injured person’s trauma *onto society*.”¹¹⁰ Bruce believes that society has accepted the themes of victimhood promoted by the feminist elite. She fears that these themes encourage individuals to transfer blame from themselves to a larger group (for Bruce, the “larger group” usually implies conservatives) which will lead to a despotic and socialist nation.

Like Hoff Sommers, Bruce argues that the feminist establishment promotes misandry, urging women to join together in a war against men. Bruce easily reduces liberal feminism to the “vapid malevolency” of NOW’s leadership and (like Hoff Sommers) minimizes the points of contention that exist between Bruce and her constituency in regards to feminism (e.g., reproductive rights, sexuality, and the reader shall see with Dr. Laura, the natural role of women). Coupled with her claims of victimhood, feminism is presented as a threat to the mental health of individual women, the relationships between men and women, and the overall stability of society. Bruce’s answer—authentic feminism—is much like Hoff Sommers’ equity feminism, in that it looks to empower women via assimilation. Also like Hoff Sommers, Bruce fosters identification with the authentic feminist via antithesis. She demonstrates how women are *already* empowered if *they choose to be*. Opportunities are available to women and there is no reason to feel victimized.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

However, while Hoff Sommers' and Bruce's feminisms are similar, there are important differences. Where Hoff Sommers' memories of feminism attempt to entirely discard 1960s and 1970s feminism, Bruce seeks a return to the NOW of the 1960s. Most notably, Bruce lauds the liberal goal of the "old NOW" to bring individual women in full and equal participation with men and suggests the organization is disingenuous in its current efforts to do the same. Unlike Hoff Sommers, who believes feminist organizations like NOW have always been radical, Bruce believes NOW *was* liberal in its individualist goals for legal equality and has only recently become gender essentialist.

Bruce is not alone in her convictions or the overtly individualistic tone she employs to both denigrate and praise the actions of NOW. As Wood articulates, power feminist literature is widely popular in the United States.¹¹¹ Speaking to what might attract modern women to power feminism, Michaela D.E. Meyer explains:

While one certainly could argue that these texts [power feminist] lack significant theoretical and methodological foundations, they are a product of a cultural vernacular that is in many ways more accessible to the general public than academic feminist theory In other words, the future of feminist rhetoric lies in its ability to provide women with the power of rhetorical intent.¹¹²

As this dissertation demonstrates, the successes of power feminism may be related to the larger cultural discourse of classic liberalism. The ideas promulgated by power feminists are indicative of Western ideological beliefs in autonomous individuality. Those whose benefit from dominant ideologies will be attracted to a feminism that frames women as autonomous agents. For example, bell hooks suggests that power

¹¹¹ Julia T. Wood, "Dominant and Muted Discourses in Popular Representations of Feminism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 82 (1996): 171–205.

¹¹² Meyer, "Women Speak(ing)," 10.

feminism is ideal for middle to upper-class, white women who have access to forms of power that other women do not. She suggests that power feminism is articulated in terms of the masses, but is truly only accessible to a privileged few. For the underprivileged populations gender, race and socio-economic status have very measurable implications in how lives are organized, lived, and limited. Moreover, hooks suggests that in ignoring social constraints on gender, power feminism actually teaches privileged women to communicate more aggressively and effectively within the established (and patriarchal) communication tradition.¹¹³

Thus, in redefining feminism as a movement of individuality rather than equality, Bruce's power feminism actually reinforces forms of patriarchal oppression that continue to subjugate most women. Unlike Bruce, who is a wealthy, white, educated, and physically attractive woman, most women in the United States cannot simply "get over" patriarchy. The history of discrimination is diffused when women become the sole agents of their oppression, and thus responsible for it. The deep-seated values that allow the discrimination in the first place go unchanged. Power feminism, and the classically liberal tradition with which it allies, too easily dismisses issues of victimization and blames victims for their own subjugation or oppression.

Bruce's creation of a new class of feminist elite and her status as a token minority compound this situation. As a token, she is "proof" that feminists and other leftists are wrong. She is also proof that the new class has "hoodwinked" society into believing otherwise. Her narratives are constructed in a way to reveal how the feminist elite have

¹¹³ bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).

abandoned women and women's issues. The reader is left to wonder if being a feminist is even relevant, or if going it alone is a better means to enlightenment or empowerment.

Bruce's remembering of feminism functions as a means to portray "radical" (what many feminists might call liberal) feminism as historically anti-American; while "authentic" feminism (or classically liberal politics for individuals who happen to be women) is laudably American. Bruce embeds her history of feminism in classically liberal ideologies and is able to create a modern memory of feminism that works to establish the movement as a traitor to the nation. Feminism is equated to socialism and thus becomes not only anti-American, but also irrational. Consequently, individualism manifests as the only option for thwarting the dangers presented by leftist ideologies. "We are living examples of our surprising power," Bruce states.¹¹⁴ "Every day Americans put into practice the idea of liberty and its necessary machinery—capitalism."¹¹⁵ In this regard, Bruce operates within a paradigm that promotes the comforts of capitalism while ignoring the very real power structures that continue to subjugate minorities in the United States.

Bruce's narratives illustrate how memory works to maintain and sustain hegemonic constructs (in this case, classic liberalism). Memory studies help the critic understand the "human consciousness" of collective life. As Beisecker explains, exploring how cultural narratives work together to weave the web of hegemony allows the critic to unpack hegemonic constraints placed upon the human actors that inhabit the

¹¹⁴ Bruce, *The New American Revolution*, 4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

collective spirit.¹¹⁶ In this case, exposing the rhetorical strategies embedded in Bruce's cultural narratives reveals the social constraints placed on gender in contemporary society. Bruce's attempts to define authentic feminism (which is arguably a form of power feminism) as a "pure" feminism erase the importance of gender in the name of autonomous individuality.

Maddux explains that the problem with post-feminist texts (like Bruce's), is not only that they misrepresent feminism while at the same time reinforcing patriarchal systems of oppression, but also that they come to represent "what passes for feminism in the twenty-first century."¹¹⁷ She states:

in this post-feminist era, when the term "feminism" is only poorly defined by a generation of women eager to disavow it (Dow, 1996, p. 93), maybe the term has become the sort of empty signifier that can be easily and convincingly applied to any text so long as it features women.¹¹⁸

Speaking as a strong, independent woman, coupled with a token status as lesbian, seems to lend Bruce the "credentials" to call her ideas "feminist." Yet her "feminist" position maintains the cultural values that subjugate women. Much like Hoff Sommers, whose classically liberal commitments create a feminist position that upholds masculine dominance, Bruce's feminist position may alter a woman's social status (e.g., in following Bruce's example a woman may achieve individual prosperity). However, it does not address the reasons why a woman has to create a space for herself, a space that

¹¹⁶Barbara Beisecker, "Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88, (2002): 393-409.

¹¹⁷ Kristy Maddux, "The *da Vinci Code* and the Regressive Gender Politics of Celebrating Women," *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25, (2008): 243.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

other members of society simply enjoy as an unearned privilege of birth—an inherent right.

Bruce’s narratives reinforce classically liberal systems of oppression by tying the “bootstrap” mentality of autonomous individuality into themes of love and patriotism, where readers have a choice to be American heroes or to join the socialist machine:

Ultimately, we are engaged in a war to determine the future of virtue. The failure of a culture does not always happen on the battle field—sometimes a great civilization collapses from within. But we don’t have to let that happen. We can be a crew that has decided to survive, and even win.¹¹⁹

Bruce is able to meld political attitudes, moral commitments and identities into a larger conservative coalition of “cultural heroes.” Her rhetoric is *not* indoctrination, which is a tool of the left. Rather Bruce is simply testifying to the classically liberal beliefs that her audience already holds, but has been too scared to wield for fear of being called racist, sexist, or homophobic. Bruce is here to help her readers reclaim their classically liberal virtues: “The issues I’ll be presenting to you are morally plain and clear—not just to the devout, but to the *decent*.”¹²⁰

Conservative narratives engage in a battle for America’s moral high ground, using rhetorical identification coupled with emotional themes of love for God and country as ammunition to bolster the movement and to fix the definition of “decency” at the expense of social justice. In turning to Dr. Laura, these themes of love, patriotism, and *decency*, come to define the classically liberal subject and his or her activism. As is evident with Bruce, if the “friend” is decent, then the “leftist enemy” (one of whom is the

¹¹⁹ Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong*, 37.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 36–37.

radical/liberal feminist) is certainly corrupt. Conservative activism via traditional virtues becomes a weapon for conservative pundits in a war for the hearts and minds of American individuals—and our memories of feminism, as well as contemporary identity as feminists, are caught in the crossfire.

Chapter Four

Loving Mothers, Virtuous Wives: Fighting Liberal/Radical Feminism with the Archetypical “True Woman”

Dr. Laura Schlessinger is a self-proclaimed psychoanalyst and family therapist. She has been offering advice via radio waves and best-selling self-help books since the early 1990s. Like both Bruce and Hoff Sommers, “Dr. Laura” has amassed a large following of politically conservative constituents through her radio shows, columns, books, and website. As a moral conservative, Dr. Laura blames “liberal” practices such as feminism as the root of a perceived cataclysmic attack on “traditional” family values. She explains, “The feminist’s ‘pro-choice’ message is that women should tear their babies from their bodies to die—so that they are serving the sisterhood by being more available for workplace accomplishments or sexual promiscuity without being hampered by diaper hampers.” She continues, “One doesn’t have to be a rocket scientist to see how this has been profoundly destructive to the American family and the morale of young people, somewhat confused and still idealistic about having a loving, secure marriage and family.”¹

Dr. Laura’s disenchantment with feminism echoes Bruce and Hoff Sommers, in that she associates modern feminism with the liberal and radical activism of the 1960s

¹ Laura Schlessinger, “How Low Can Women Go? Dr. Laura Schlessinger nails Barbara Walters for Sleazy TV Program,” *WorldNetDaily.com*, May 7, 2004, retrieved February 10, 2009 from http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=38381.

and 1970s. In the biography included in her book, *Ten Stupid Things Women do to Mess Up Their Lives*, Dr. Laura explains her commitment to a moral conservative agenda:

While she was in college, during the late 1960s, the feminist movement riled her up, as it did most. She rejoices in much of the progress in law and societal action gained by this struggle, yet the ensuing years evidenced to her that something special had also been lost for women: the notion of their specialness with respect to their unique position in the cycle of “new life.”²

Yet, Dr. Laura’s narratives are different from the other “true feminists” of this project in important ways. Dr. Laura focuses on issues of religion, morality, and the *natural role of women* as mothers, nurturers and care-givers. In contrast, Bruce’s locus of criticism lies in NOW and Hoff Sommers’ primarily in the academy and in organizational culture. Dr. Laura’s rhetoric is steeped in conservative values of moral traditionalism, but is combined with the individualism found in classically liberal doctrines.

For example, Dr. Laura identifies with some feminist activism, but only insofar as it advances individual rights:

The true ideal of feminism—that men and women should have the same rights and opportunities—is an obvious positive civil rights issue. But that is not the feminism that has ever dominated. The feminist movement as such was totally co-opted by a mentality that despised femininity, motherhood, wifehood and men in all forms except castrated.³

Dr. Laura acknowledges the classically liberal struggle for equality and individual (women’s) rights, but her commitment to gender equality stems from her belief in the superior morality of women and their traditional roles as helpmates. Described in later sections of this chapter, Dr. Laura’s narratives are examples of the Cult of True

² Laura Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Women do to Mess Up Their Lives*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1994): 231.

³ Laura Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2007): 27.

Womanhood, an ideological construct that assumes women inherently possess special moral qualities above those of men. Cult narratives portray the moral superiority of women as the vehicle for female empowerment. They create an archetypal mother figure (sometimes called the “True Woman,” “true womanhood” or the “Positive Woman”) who finds her self-worth from her purity and in embracing the roles of mother, wife, and caregiver.⁴ Dr. Laura establishes a “true power” of woman that is found only through motherhood and family.

In this chapter, I explore the Cult of True Womanhood/Domesticity and Dr. Laura’s use of constitutive narratives to define the “essence” of womanhood. I argue that Dr. Laura’s narratives draw on historical constructions of femininity; that she defines womanhood using the pillars of Cult ideologies to help her audience identify with the archetypal figure of the “True Woman.” Dr. Laura uses the True Woman to promote her conservative commitments to the virtues of self-discipline and individual responsibility as the solution to social problems. I argue that Dr. Laura’s memories construct a story of feminism that associates present constraints on gender with the “excesses” of the past (particularly “radical” feminism of the 60s and 70s):

Since the 1960s, the so-called liberation of women has proven itself to be a liberation from just about everything that could possibly be of value for a woman and for the society she influences by her choice in a man and her commitment to raising the next generation of citizens.⁵

⁴ Caryn Medved, “Investigating Family Labor in Communication Studies: Threading Across Historical and Contemporary Discourses,” *Journal of Family Communication*, 7, (2004): 225–243; Martha Solomon, “The ‘Positive Woman’s’ Journey: A Mythical Analysis of the Rhetoric of STOP ERA,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 65, (1979): 262–74.

⁵ Schlessinger, “How Low Can Women Go?”

Dr. Laura offers the absence of the “virtuous wife” and “loving mother” as the stimulus for a series of public problems, starting with broken homes and ending in abortion, drug use, prostitution, pornography and so on. Moreover, Dr. Laura’s Cult narratives portray feminism as the antithesis of religious morality—an almost anti-religion that on its face should be seen for the folly that it is: “One doesn’t have to be a religious fundamentalist to value the sacred nature of the human body—the female body in particular.”⁶

A close reading of Dr. Laura’s narratives reveals a tension between competing gender ideologies of morality and equality. I argue that the celebration of true womanhood in Dr. Laura’s narratives provides a “feminist guise,” allowing Dr. Laura’s gender ideologies to appear “empowering” for women. Her position of female empowerment can be linked to the cultural or temperance feminism of the first wave which sought to procure women’s rights from the argument of expediency. However, in reinforcing problematic ideologies of Cult narratives, Dr. Laura simultaneously undermines gender liberation by relegating the feminine experience to the private sphere. She reinscribes binary notions of gender while at the same time reinforcing a white, heteronormative culture.

Just as Hoff Sommers constitutes the “equity feminist” and Bruce creates the “authentic feminist” as the figures best suited to “take America Back,” Dr. Laura creates a notion of the True Woman that can save the family and thus society by embracing woman’s natural roles as wife, mother and care-giver. Throughout this chapter, I explore Cult narratives and how the tenets of submissiveness to men, self-sacrifice, care-giving

⁶ Schlessinger, “How Low Can Women Go?”

and nurturing coupled with a veneration to God and country, uphold the order of classic liberalism (by such values as individuality and reason). I expose how Cult narratives maintain the separation of feminine and masculine spheres through the social contract (a classically liberal principle I address in a later section). Cult narratives value these spheres differently so that men may participate in the classically liberal sphere without the threat of women.

The Cult of True Womanhood: Constructing Identity with the Archetypal “True Woman”

The Cult of True Womanhood arose from the ideological commitment to an inherent feminine morality and a woman’s natural position in the home. The “Cult” venerates women as wives and mothers, situating them as “the moral protectors of the hearth and home against the evils of commerce.”⁷ Cult ideologies are imbedded in classically liberal beliefs of the 1700s which excluded women from the public sphere for a number of reasons—including the belief that women were too “innocent” to engage in politics. Related to the expediency arguments of temperance and religious movements, the original Cult of True Womanhood was concerned with the moral nature and “purity” of women. However, the relationship between suffrage movements and Cult ideologies ends with the belief that women were morally superior to men. The Cult of True Womanhood did not seek to influence public policy. In fact, it worked to keep women outside of the public sphere in order to protect women’s “virtue.”⁸

Cult narratives juxtapose the role of the virtuous mother with a strong father figure, portraying men as inherently logical, intelligent, and possessing the physical

⁷ Medved, “Investigating Family Labor,” 228.

⁸ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume I*, (Greenwood Press, New York, 1989).

strength necessary to protect and provide for the family.⁹ Cult ideologies were a response to the economic and social changes of the industrial revolution that challenged notions of the traditional family.¹⁰ Prior to the industrial revolution, families were predominantly viewed as working “units” where each individual member was responsible for the family’s overall welfare.¹¹ Certainly there were naturalized gender roles in pre-industrial families; however, the idea of distinct and separate spheres, where women were naturally predisposed to the private and men to the public, was not as prevalent. As Western societies became less agrarian, and as the industrial revolution gave rise to the middle class, the gap between the public and private spheres became more pronounced. Gender roles, too, became more dialectical. In a family that no longer required all able-bodied members to work the land, the husband became the only “natural” breadwinner. His physical masculine prowess and superior intellect “naturally” suited him to the perils of public life. In contrast, the “natural” feminine virtue of women rendered them unsuitable for life outside the home. Where the working husband became the family’s “hero,” women who worked outside the home were viewed as unnatural, an aberration of their sex.

Today, Cult narratives are sometimes used as a means to justify claims (like Dr. Laura’s), that gender and sex are inexorably related and that there is a “true nature” of women that is denied through life outside the home and family. Contemporary Cult narratives are sometimes described as “feminist” because they seek to empower women

⁹ Medved, “Investigating Family Labor.”

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

by revealing the “true power” that women wield as wives and mothers. Such narratives create an archetypal mother figure (the True Woman) that serves as the guardian angel to her family. Cult narratives juxtapose the archetypal mother with the modern day jezebel (working, single woman/mothers).

Often, Cult narratives romanticize mothering and care-giving as idyllic and natural activities. The archetypal True Woman engages in a romantic journey where, throughout the various stages of her married life, she finds empowerment through her natural gift of nurturing. Like any life experience, frustrations are a part of the journey, but the frustrations of the True Woman are portrayed as a beautiful—and necessary—part of life and learning for the family.¹² Dr. Laura tells her readers:

Look at me—I made the transition from being a powerhouse to being at home, folding laundry. What they [new stay at home mothers] need to do is find value elsewhere. I tell these women to look in their children’s eyes. When your husband comes home, wrap your body around him at the door and look at his eyes. What people need to learn is that it’s not about the drudgery of housework—it’s about being at home for all of those incredible moments that make your life more valuable than the person who replaced you at work. No one can replace mom. Kids who don’t have moms suffer a lifetime.¹³

Dr. Laura was a radio host before she became a mother (she also had her own private family counseling practice for 12 years and was on the faculty of the Department of Biology at the University of Southern California, and the Graduate Psychology Department at Pepperdine University).¹⁴ She never left her job as a radio host, even after she gave birth. Instead, she hosted her radio show in the evenings and stayed at home

¹² Solomon, “The ‘Positive Woman’s’ Journey.”

¹³ Laura Schlessinger, interview by Michelle Kung, “The Mommy Wars: Dr. Laura on Stay at Home Moms,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 8, 2009. Retrieved June 15, 2009 from <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123913529589098057.html>.

¹⁴ Laura Schlessinger, “About Dr. Laura,” retrieved July 6, 2009 from <http://www.drlaura.com/about/>

during the day.¹⁵ Her position is that once a woman becomes pregnant, or at least by the time she gives birth, she should sacrifice her working identity and dedicate herself to the role of motherhood. In *Ten Stupid Things Women do to Mess Up their Lives*, Dr. Laura reflects on her own pregnancy and the instinctive nature she felt when raising and protecting her child. “The question of my attachment and responsibility was no longer abstract,” Dr. Laura recalls. “Here was a life of my life, growing in my body—my son. I instinctively knew that this was, for me, the most special of bonds.”¹⁶

Dr. Laura employs experiential narratives of pregnancy and motherhood in many of her arguments as a means to reaffirm her interpretation of the true nature of femininity. She explains that before her pregnancy, she lived her life for her and her husband, but upon conceiving, her role as mother naturally superseded all other commitments. Dr. Laura translates the virtue or “natural beauty” of care-giving that is reminiscent of the 1700s Cult to the modern day feminine experience. Working women can find their “true value,” and a new identity elsewhere (i.e., in the home) by caring for their children and “wrapping themselves” around their men. I discuss later how this “new identity” (which is supposed to be selfless) ironically translates into the classically liberal principles of autonomous individuality and liberty.

The point here is not to deny the bond Dr. Laura experienced while pregnant with her son, nor is it to discredit the important relationships parents have with their children. Instead, it is to expose how Cult narratives like Dr. Laura’s use the biological reality of

¹⁵ Laura Schlessinger, *In Praise of Stay at Home Moms* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2009); Laura Schlessinger, “About Dr. Laura.”

¹⁶ Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Women do to Mess Up Their Lives*, 156.

female reproduction to create an archetypal woman (who is both mother and wife) and to suggest that women have a natural place in the home. Thus, finding satisfaction and empowerment outside the role of motherhood can be constructed as unnatural and dangerous to the female psyche. Dr. Laura explains:

The first battle cries of feminism had to do with this amorphous misery of being a so-called “drudge” in the home—being a wife, mother and homemaker would somehow cause a woman to contract the “disease with no name.” This disease supposedly represented the unhappiness due to routine housework and a lack of sense of meaningfulness, importance and power because she was not in rush-hour traffic dealing with an impersonal corporate structure.¹⁷

In a weblog entitled “Baby Boomer Women are Committing Suicide ... Why?” Dr. Laura continues to address women’s dissatisfaction, specifically speaking to the women who embraced the liberal and radical feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. Here she suggests that feminist beliefs can cause women extreme psychological harm:

I’m not surprised that so many of these women are depressed and suicidal. Feminists lied to them that they could and would “have it all:” they only had to sacrifice the loveliest parts of their womanhood.¹⁸

It is ironic that a movement that sought to open up possibilities for women is portrayed as limiting those options. However, Dr. Laura is guilty of limiting options for women as well by establishing an “either or” paradigm. She offers her readership very little room to navigate between the private and the public. Cult narratives suggest that it is impossible to identify as both a mother/wife and as a feminist. Dr. Laura offers herself as an example of a woman who was “brought up during the feminist years of the sixties who thought

¹⁷ Schlessinger, “How Low Can Women Go?”

¹⁸ Laura Schlessinger, “Baby Boomer Women,” *Dr. Laura’s Blog*, retrieved February 10, 2009 from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/category/feminism/>.

mothering was some kind of cop-out,” but has nonetheless found joy in leaving her feminist beliefs behind and identifying as a true woman.¹⁹

Dr. Laura is offering female empowerment through true womanhood. Unfortunately, like other Cult narratives, her form of empowerment reestablishes patriarchy by situating women in a dialectical and subordinate relationship to men. This creates a feminist guise where a woman’s role as a care-giver indirectly provides her with power.²⁰ Solomon explains that in Cult ideologies, “the image of women in traditional contexts as dynamic, self-directed and important” communicates to women that subservience to men is not demeaning.²¹ Rather, these images convey that because of modern technology and conveniences, American wives and mothers have tremendous possibilities and are the envy of women around the world.²²

In contrast to the natural power inherent in women, Dr. Laura remembers 1960s and 1970s feminism as the poison that draws women away from their venerated place in the home. Feminism is responsible for a society of fallen women, as Dr. Laura explains:

1960’s feminists decried what they saw as the sexual objectification of women. Now, the feminists hold up the Britney Spears, Madonnas, Hiltons and so forth as powerful, significant, important role-models for girls. Fashions are slutty and skanky as even women with jelly-bellies wear pants that barely cover pubic (now public?) hair as they dress their young daughters to look like available Lolitas.²³

¹⁹ Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Women do to Mess Up Their Lives*, 157.

²⁰ Solomon, “The ‘Positive Woman’s’ Journey.”

²¹ *Ibid.*,” 268.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Schlessinger, “How Low Can Women Go?”

Modern women lose their power (in fact, they are laughable) because they have lost their virtue. Dr. Laura believes that women should know better than to behave in such a scandalous fashion. After all, it is their true nature to be moral and virtuous.

However, she claims that radical feminism brainwashes its followers “into thinking that the sexes are the same to various degrees (‘and other feminist gobbledygook’).”²⁴ She argues that feminism has created a generation of women who turn away from their natural femininity and is responsible for a generation of men who cannot respect women because of it:

You may be wondering which came first, the chicken—feminism—or the egg—male selfishness and immaturity. I believe the answer is feminism. From the first day that *The Feminine Mystique* hit the bookstexttands [sic], feminism did not focus on equal pay for equal work, but on how marriage, husbands, men in general, and children in specific were the enemies and the oppressors of true womanhood. All, and I mean all, women’s studies programs in high schools and universities brainwashed women into believing that they diminished themselves with motherhood unless they were just a receptacle for birth and didn’t actually raise their own children, and marriage, which was twisted into an acceptance of patriarchal control and domination.²⁵

For Dr. Laura, feminism was fine in its pure, classically liberal form. However, in turning away from the classically liberal principle of equality and embracing more “radical” positions regarding gender, feminism guides women away from their true purpose as care-givers. Dr. Laura uses women’s denial of true womanhood as an explanation for women’s dissatisfaction, the fall of families, and ultimately society. This is an example of how Cult narratives discipline women who attempt to enter the public sphere and venerate those who remain in the private.

²⁴ Laura Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2004): 91.

²⁵ Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage*, (New York, NY: Harpers Collins, 2003): 4.

Dr. Laura blames the liberal feminist leadership for the current radical state of feminism, and subsequently the state of families in the United States:

Then came the Alice Walker types; Walker, revered as a trail-blazing feminist and author who touched the lives of a generation of women, proclaimed motherhood as about the worst thing that could happen to a woman ... Follow that up with Gloria Steinem's declaration that stay-at-home moms were valueless, and what young woman in her right mind would choose to become a valueless slave?²⁶

Like Hoff Sommers and Bruce, Dr. Laura exposes the feminist leadership as an "elite" class that employs its intellectual savvy to sway the innocent minds of new generations.

Dr. Laura uses Cult ideologies to fight the "tricky" feminist elite, exposing them as an enemy of the True Woman: "Feminism has been a scourge upon the land and upon women, children, men, and ultimately, families and society," Dr. Laura explains.²⁷ She, too, was almost "tricked" into believing the (radical/liberal) feminist lie:

I also consider myself a "reformed feminist." Having been at University in the 1960s, I was "enlightened" to believe that marriage and mothering were conspiracies to eliminate my power, worth, and choice. I carefully watched every word, nuance, attitude suggestion, expectation, reaction and behavior for proof that "he" was trying to dominate or disrespect me as a woman.²⁸

In some ways, this "conversion story" works in a similar fashion to Bruce's token rhetoric and allows Dr. Laura to disclose her insider knowledge of feminism. Dr. Laura explains how she is aware of feminist positions, of how she understands them but does not agree with them, and how she converted to True Womanhood once she realized feminism was nothing more than a movement based on conspiracies. The reader can trust her because of her experiential knowledge.

²⁶ Schlessinger, *In Praise of Stay at Home Moms*, 15.

²⁷ Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage*, 26–27.

²⁸ Laura Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Couples Do to Mess Up Their Relationships*, (New York, NY: Harper Paperbacks, 2003): 53.

Dr. Laura lends her knowledge in the form of advice. In order for women to fix their lives (which, in the absence of a husband or child, are presumably broken), Dr. Laura suggests that women learn to re-embrace their natural roles as mothers and wives that the feminist movement has taught them to loathe: "One of the unfortunate sequelae of the feminist movement is a lack of respect for the uniqueness and specialness of femininity and masculinity."²⁹ "Feminist educators and activists," she explains, "keep trying to squeeze men and women into niches that may simply not be a good match for their innate qualities as individuals as well as their unique masculine and feminine drives."³⁰ According to Dr. Laura, men and women can resolve their differences by embracing the uniqueness of their gender, and for women, this means returning to the home to create and care for their families.

In this regard, Dr. Laura's narratives assume that because of their genetic makeup, women are best suited to providing adequate care to insure their children's physical and physiological wellbeing. She explains:

Women have breasts from which to suckle the baby born from their uterus after a nine month gestation. Women's high-pitched voices and hearing are geared for the infant-mother bonding that miraculously takes place right after birth. Women's temperaments to nurture, cuddle, coo, and protect are hardwired into their psychological programming. Women are *different* from men.³¹

In Dr. Laura's updated Cult narrative, biology (breasts, wombs, and vocal pitch) is a means to define gender (or more specifically, women's inherent nurturing ability).

²⁹ Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, 103.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

³¹ Laura Schlessinger, "Am I Anti-Female?" *The Dr. Laura Blog*, retrieved February 19, 2009 from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/>.

In addition, modern Cult narratives proffer “traditional” performances of gender over alternative practices. For example, Dr. Laura reveals in her article “Parenthood by Proxy” that “there are many who advocate and/or directly profit from the decline of the traditional family, including homosexual activists, radical feminists, welfare advocates and the child-care industry.” So not only does Dr. Laura suggest that alternative families are “unnatural;” she implies that supporting or being a part of them is immoral, because alternative families profit from the crumbling gender order. Natural families are apparently forced to conform to the norms and desires of a deviant and powerful few. Dr. Laura’s narratives are well-situated within a larger paradigm that silences the experiences of alternative family lifestyles, rendering these experiences as deviant and outside the norm: “Of course, the best way to provide for and protect one’s children is to provide them with a stable, happy nest, with a married mommy and a daddy who live for their family.”³² Dr. Laura contrasts the healthy environment provided by a heterosexual marriage in a column for *Jewish World Review*:

Talk about the power of ideology run amok! That the government permits a child to be robbed of a father to satisfy the political demands of gay activists is an outrage. Since when do people have a “right” to practice deviant sexual behavior and bring innocent children into their homes?³³

Dr. Laura asks, “Are we going to just let these events [gay marriage, adoption, etc.] go by and not fight to preserve traditional families, which are the foundation of our civilization and our society?”³⁴

³² Laura Schlessinger, “How Low Can Women Go?”

³³ Laura Schlessinger, “Why Celebrate Homosexuality?” *Jewish World Review*, July 27, 1999, retrieved from <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/dr/laura072799.asp>.

³⁴ Ibid.

The deviance of alternative families implicitly reaffirms gender ideologies that define women as caregivers and men as providers. In promoting traditional gender roles, Cult narratives reinforce heteronormative standards of family life and simultaneously illustrate how the working mother is the enemy to the traditional family. The working mother is a traitor to her gender and family precisely because she assumes the role a husband should embody. In doing so, she and her children suffer; and so does the male psyche. The emasculation of men is an important factor in Cult narratives and further supports the notion that the genders are naturally predisposed to particular social roles. In *The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage*, Dr. Laura suggests that the increases in divorce and single-parent homes are a direct result of the emasculation of men. She explains that women no longer respect masculinity and thus have created a society where men feel undervalued, and as a consequence, no longer feel responsible for assuming their roles as protectors and “our heroes.”³⁵ Instead she states, “Chivalry is largely dead and feminism is the murderer. It soured both males and females on the joy, awe, wonder, excitement, thrill, satisfaction from, and mystery of femininity and masculinity.”³⁶

In her 2004 book, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, Dr. Laura extends the “death” of the traditional family to a memory of feminist ideology. She tells her readers:

Contrary to what a good forty years of feminist propaganda has claimed, it is not oppression, subjugation, or abdication of any feminine quality-of-life potential to marry a man, be proud of your bonding, rejoice in your gifts and sacrifices for

³⁵ Schlessinger, *Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage*, 45.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

your marriage and family, and derive sustenance from your role as wife and mother.³⁷

But rather than deriving sustenance as True Women, Dr. Laura suggests that modern “[w]omen have been sexually liberated into the notion of becoming unpaid whores.”³⁸ Cult qualities, such as pride in self-sacrifice and the rewards obtained through wifehood and motherhood, bolster Dr. Laura’s reverence for true womanhood. The conflicting feminist virtue of sexual liberation challenges True Womanhood by offering satisfaction through deviant alternatives. Liberation via feminism clearly troubles Dr. Laura and even reduces her to name-calling as she struggles to save the American family.

Dr. Laura’s memories suggest that before feminism, families in the United States enjoyed happy marriages with economic stability, and were comprised of loving parents and well-cared-for children. Her subsequent portrayal of the feminist activism of the 1960s and 1970s juxtaposes feminism with the idyllic family, portraying the movement as the catalyst for the downfall of American morality:

On my radio program I recently reported on a study from England which concluded that the largest cause of the overwhelming divorce rate is the bad behavior of women! Feminism once stood for a belief that career aspirations and social roles should not be limited by gender. Today, feminists are applauding women engaging in stereotypical masculine mis-behaviors: aggression, self-centeredness, abandonment of marriage, pornography, and promiscuity. More and more women decide they’re entitled to their happiness no matter the cost to children, families, or society.³⁹

From a Cult perspective, one of the duties of being man’s helpmate is to temper his aggression and his inclination for vice. If women have lost their virtue, they cannot help

³⁷ Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, xxii.

³⁸ Schlessinger, “How Low Can Women Go?”

³⁹ Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Couples Do to Mess Up Their Relationships*, 79.

men realize their capacity as providers, which is potentially devastating for society. Once again, Dr. Laura is blaming women's liberation for a series of moral dilemmas. Her condemnation lends credence to feminism's cultural influence, which reminds readers how powerful (and thus dangerous) feminism is.

Dr. Laura states, "The liberal feminist mantra—child care, marriage and men are oppressive—precludes any discussion of obligation and sacrifice for family."⁴⁰

Feminism's sin appears to be that it distracts women from their self-sacrificing and subservient roles. In a direct affront to morality and nature, liberal feminism "breaks the rules" by denying a relationship between women and their families:

In the 1960s, I was seduced by the feminist anger that proclaimed that husbands and kids were in the way of getting power and respect. We lost way too much because of the anger vented on men and mothering. As many of you may know, I did not have the most mothering mommy possible, and that probably contributed to my negativity at the time. But at age 35, I had an epiphany. What I was missing from my life was being a wife and a mommy.⁴¹

Dr. Laura's seduction is similar to Bruce's experiences with feminism. Both women reveal how hard it was to turn away from the tempting "radical" liberal feminist agenda. The deterioration of "good" (classically liberal) feminism into a feminism reminiscent of the 1960s and 1970s radical agenda reveals how outrageous the movement has become:

The feminist movement started out largely as "we're individuals worthy of respect—if we have the brains and competence we should get a job and be paid." That's civil rights, that's good sense—it makes good business. So I have no issue with that, obviously. I'm a woman! I like that concept a lot ...But the feminist movement was quickly co-opted by women who hate women, who are not interested in things about women—marriage, men, child-bearing—and who have

⁴⁰ Laura Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Parents Do to Mess Up Their Kids*, (New York, NY: Harper Paperbacks, 2001): 38.

⁴¹ Laura Schlessinger, "Why I am Praising of Moms," *Dr. Laura's Blog*, retrieved June 12, 2009 from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/category/in-praise-of-mom/>.

negatively brainwashed women to believe that they are completely unimportant to their own children.⁴²

When associated with classically liberal (individual) rights (e.g., the right to equal work for equal pay) feminism “makes sense” and is even “good business.”

However, for Dr. Laura there simply is no difference between liberal and radical feminism—their disavowal of true womanhood renders the two very different branches of feminism one and the same. All feminist activism of the 1960s and 1970s is portrayed as one diabolical movement once it is separated from the classically liberal struggle for individual rights:

Many women are angry at the bill of goods the boomer generation and the 1960s and 1970s sold them. “*They really screwed with our heads. Let women be what they want and respect them for their choices,*” is what one exasperated listener wrote. It is a paradox, that the very folks, the feminists, who espouse CHOICE, CHOICE, CHOICE, AND MORE CHOICE, only mean, as with most radical groups, their style of choice and then demean all others.⁴³

The “choice” this listener and Dr. Laura are speaking of is the right to reproductive freedom. For Dr. Laura and her constituency, 1960s and 1970s feminism broke the most fundamental (and moral/religious/natural) rule of motherhood—protect one’s children, at all costs.

Dr. Laura’s memory of liberal feminism highlights the movement’s preference for women to work rather than bear children. It fails to address the liberal feminist position of choice that sought to provide women with options beyond, or in addition to, mothering. It also fails to remember the liberal feminist position of granting women

⁴² Laura Schlessinger, interview by Phil Brennan, “*Exclusive Interview: Dr. Laura: Feminist Movement ‘Knifed’ Parenting,*” *NewsMax.com* Wednesday, January 25, 2006, retrieved July 13, 2009 from <http://archive.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2006/1/24/144521.shtml>.

⁴³ Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Couples Do to Mess Up Their Relationships*, 58.

respect as equal members of society, regardless of their job description. Dr. Laura's amnesia reflects a political commitment to vilifying feminism, where fostering identification with the True Woman is dependent upon an enemy. A radical feminist position fulfills the requirements. A liberal feminist position may pose too many "sticking points" for Dr. Laura, especially with the liberal feminist positions of equality and autonomous individuality. A memory of a feminist movement that is less than radical may not be persuasive enough for a classically liberal and moral conservative audience.

Importantly, however, when Dr. Laura speaks of "choice" she is speaking from the perspective of an upper-middle class white woman. The problems that she and her constituency share are indicative of a fairly privileged class that benefits from the separation of public (working) and private (home) spheres. In the following sections, I demonstrate how the Cult of True Womanhood reinforces the patriarchal assumptions embedded in classically liberal principles and point to how classic liberalism maintains power imbalances between men and women.

Classically Liberal Thought and True Womanhood

If one accepts that United States culture is driven by classically liberal ideologies (and I think it is fair to make such an assumption), then it is important to understand how our cultural practices uphold those ideologies. In this section, I demonstrate how Cult narratives promulgate a classically liberal "code of conduct" for the American family. I expose how Dr. Laura's memories discipline 1960s and 1970s feminism by translating Cult narratives into classically liberal principles such as autonomous individuality and the gendered (male) premise of the social contract (which I describe later).

To begin this discussion it is helpful to explore how classic liberalism organizes cultural attitudes toward gender in the United States. “Culture” is a culmination of institutions and social practices that maintain a certain social order by legitimizing some values and beliefs over others. I argue that classically liberal institutions (e.g., government and education) and practices (e.g., capitalism) maintain the traditional definitions of gender (primarily through definitions of family) found in Cult narratives, and vice versa. I look at the concept of the “social contract,” as defined by Locke and Hobbes, which explains how autonomous individuals maintain relationships in the public sphere.

The social contract begins with the premise of autonomous individuality. The principle of autonomous individuality mandates that the state have the least amount of control possible in the private lives of citizens. The concept of the social contract assumes that men are reasonable creatures and can peacefully interact with each other through a mutually beneficial pact, a “social contract,” that insures each man is free to pursue his desires (which is beneficial to the state) while not harming his fellow man (which leaves that man free to pursue his own desires, which is also beneficial for the state).⁴⁴ The initial idea behind the social contract was, quite literally, that those who had property to protect agreed to act fairly with each other. They would “not do harm to each other,” they would create civil forms to govern their dealings. Importantly, the social

⁴⁴ David Gauthier, “The Social Contract as Ideology,” in Robert E. Goodin and Philip Petit eds., *Contemporary Political Philosophy* 2nd eds., (1977; repr., Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2006): 55-72; I refer citizens using the masculine pronoun here as both Locke and Hobbes regarded the citizenry as male. This is an important distinction that I address later in my critique.

contract was the coming together of the landed (male) gentry and those (male) individuals of the bourgeoisie that had successfully appropriated land. Gauthier explains:

The male bourgeoisie have acted as a cohesive, centripetal force because they have recognized, implicitly, that they must retain appropriative activity exclusively in their hands to prevent the strife which would result from the competition of every person with every other person. But they have been able to retain appropriative activity for themselves alone, not just because of their cohesion, but because neither workers nor women have conceived of themselves as appropriators.⁴⁵

I do not agree that all workers and all women have failed to conceive of themselves as appropriators; however, I do admit (as I demonstrated in Chapter Two), that it is often challenging for women and workers to see themselves as something beyond the “Other” in public institutions. One reason workers and women have trouble viewing themselves as “appropriators” is due to cultural dialogues that define full citizenship in masculine and bourgeois terms. For example, Locke argued that a male bourgeois figure serves as the head of the household and all of his relationships within the household (with his wife, children and servants) exist outside of his contractual relationships (they are part of the private, not public sphere).⁴⁶ In contrast, the contractual relationship exists in the public sphere and organizes political society.⁴⁷ Therefore, any individual who is neither male nor bourgeois is not privy to appropriative/contractual endeavors.

As another example, Hobbes argued that the contractual relationship exists on all levels: wives agree to serve their husbands in return for protection and care; children agree to serve their parents in return for the gift of life; and man agrees to serve his

⁴⁵ Gauthier, “The Social Contract as Ideology,” 69.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

victors (or “betters”) in return for his personal safety. The idea is that men agree to be led by other men for the betterment of society. In return, they are free to procure their private pursuits (including those with women) without government interference. The relationships among propertied men, the responsibilities they hold for each other, and the institutions they create, support or control, are all labeled as contractual agreements under social contract theory.⁴⁸

Speaking in terms of ideology, Gauthier suggests that contract theory is a Western ideology meant to keep society civil. While social contracts may have once served to keep newly independent land owners from extorting their neighbors, they became the ideological, organizing force behind our social relationships.⁴⁹ Gauthier explains, “Whatever their supposed purpose, one of the main functions of social institutions is, and must be, to maintain and transmit a common ideology among those who compose a society.”⁵⁰ Ideologies link people together and provide the glue necessary to keep them together. The social contract conforms the autonomous individuals of classically liberal governments into civil members of societies.⁵¹

The social contract as ideology is supported by cultural myths of patriotism and love that valorize classically liberal principles:

Patriotism and love have had a further effect on the development of society. Historically they have served, together with the fear engendered by the coercive order which they sustain, to exclude most human beings from effective membership in market society, and thus from what, to the contractarian, are the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 56.

essentially human activities of appropriation and exchange... love and patriotism have enabled those remaining within its scope to conduct their appropriative activities more successfully. Indeed, this restriction of appropriation to largely, the male bourgeoisie has been essential to the development of our society. If every person had considered himself, or herself, to be an appropriator, in competition with every other person, then, as Hobbes insisted, only an all-powerful sovereign could have prevented endless conflict.”⁵²

The myth of patriotism promulgates the message that if individuals do not fulfill their duties of economic self improvement, the state will fail. The myth of love addresses the relationship of the individual with his or her family. The “transgenerational affective ties which bind together members of a family supply the motivation needed for each generation to seek the continuation of society.”⁵³ Classic liberalism is thus supported by cultural myths that maintain strong ties to the state (patriotism) which translates to the public sphere and specific definitions of family (love) which maintains social order in the private sphere. Gauthier suggests that social order is maintained through patriotism: “political society has rested on *patriotism*—the love of country which binds men to the coercive order because it is surrounded with the emotional trappings of fatherland or motherland.”⁵⁴ A love for one’s country is strengthened by a love for one’s family as “The effect of familial feeling has been primarily to strengthen society as an entity enduring in time.”⁵⁵

The Cult of True Womanhood is an example of a myth that places significance in God and country (patriotism) and controls definitions of family (love) that are seen as

⁵² Ibid., 68–69.

⁵³ Ibid., 69.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 67–68.

essential to the continued progress of the classically liberal state. The role of men and women in Cult narratives echo the roles laid out by Enlightenment thinkers. Men serve as the head of the household and engage in commercial and political activities in order to ensure their family's welfare and to contribute to the continued progress of the state. At the very least, the Cult virtues of submissiveness to men, care-giving and nurturing, self-sacrifice and the veneration of God and country, work to keep the feminine sphere separate from the masculine sphere. As I suggested in the introduction, men are free to participate in the classically liberal public sphere without the threat of women.

Cult narratives also support liberal principles that define women in relation to their men. Classic liberalism is founded on the principle of the natural rights of man and makes no secret of man's natural right over woman. Classic liberalism freed sons from their fathers, but sons continued to have the right and duty to rule over their wives and families. Unlike men, who were born free, women were born as the natural subjects of their fathers and upon marriage, their husbands. Importantly, this relationship is not only the natural relationship as ordained by God, but it is a private relationship, beyond the scope of politics. Rousseau is adamant about the privacy of this relationship, stating that women are "subjected either to a man or to the judgment of men and they are never permitted to put themselves above these judgments."⁵⁶ Women must have no influence in the public sphere.

Taking a page from classic liberalism, Dr. Laura argues that it is a woman's moral and natural obligation to sexually please her husband, regardless of her own feelings. In

⁵⁶ Joan Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, tr. A Bloom (Basic Books, New York, 1979): 370, quoted in Carole Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract," in Robert E. Goodin and Philip Petit, eds., *Contemporary Political Philosophy* 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 76.

her book, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, Dr. Laura provides readers with a transcript from one of her callers. The transcript reveals that Tina and Jerry, a long time married couple, are having a dispute over how many times they should have sex in the course of a week. Jerry is perplexed by Tina's lack of interest in sex. Dr. Laura asks Tina: "So what, it's gotten boring?"⁵⁷ Tina responds: "Maybe a little boring. But more important, I am tired a lot."⁵⁸ Dr. Laura offers this advice:

Tina, that is not a fair excuse. It is your *obligation* to keep yourself healthy and fit so that you can be involved with your husband. You can't do the "I am tired" bit every day and have your husband just accept that this important, intimate part of his life is simply going to be controlled by your whim. It is your obligation not to be tired all the time. So take a nap, eat more protein, take your vitamins. What kind of thing is that to pull on him? What if he said, "I'm too tired and I'm not going to work anymore?" You have obligations to each other, and one of them is not to be constantly tired.⁵⁹

As the transcript continues, Tina reveals that she does try to "spice things up" in the bedroom, but the real problem is that "we both have pretty high pressured jobs."⁶⁰ Dr. Laura responds with:

Tina, your husband isn't complaining that his high-pressured job is leading him to neglect or reject you. Any woman who allows all her other choices of how she is spending her time to interfere with the love and intimacy with your husband is behaving like a fool. Your schedule is too intense for you and you should change it. Your commitments outside your marriage are too much for you. This is making you somewhat hostile and negative to the intimacy that is a great joy and a blessing in a relationship. Also, men need to feel the approval, acceptance, and attachment from their women that comes from sexual intimacy.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Schlessinger, *Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, 24.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

Tina replies to Dr. Laura with “Okay.” Dr. Laura answers in kind with “so that *is* your obligation. It is not to spend yourself all at work.”⁶²

The transaction between Tina and Dr. Laura reveals how Cult narratives uphold classically liberal beliefs, including separate and hierarchical spheres for the sexes. Tina is reprimanded for not serving her husband sexually. Jerry’s sexual needs supersede Tina’s physical and mental wellbeing (she is tired). Tina’s lack of interest in her husband’s sexual needs is a result of her working (Jerry’s right to work is never questioned and is presented as one of his obligations to Tina). Put simply, if Tina’s identity was not so engaged in the public sphere, she would be more engaged in the bedroom and their marriage would be happier. In Rousseau’s terms, Tina has put herself above her husband’s judgments. She has lost her virtues of submissiveness to her husband, nurturing, and self-sacrifice. As a result, her marriage is lacking and both she and Jerry suffer.

Dr. Laura cautions women from following Tina’s example:

In the real world of humans, women have a unique urge toward bonding and nesting and nurturing. Men have a unique urge toward protecting, providing, and conquering. That doesn’t mean men can’t nurture children or that women can’t climb mountains, but it does mean that beneath individual variation in constitution and temperament, women and men are different. Compatibility and harmony are best served when that difference is respected and, yes, even enjoyed instead of denied or degraded.⁶³

Dr. Laura’s ideal standard of marriage and the American family fits nicely within a classically liberal paradigm. Men work hard to carve a space for themselves and their families in society. Women work hard to raise the next generation of classically liberal

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 27.

citizens. In contrast, Tina is having trouble in her marriage because she has placed so much of her identity into her work. She is ignoring her natural feminine identity, her unique urge to nurture (which includes the self-sacrifice for the conquering needs of her partner). Cult narratives transfer the classically liberal principle of individuality (that is found in the public sphere) to the private sphere. The sense of meaningfulness, importance and power that motivates the autonomous individual is translated to the True Woman. She finds her sense of power in her virtue. She will see the rewards of her submissiveness in the happy home and family she has nurtured.

As I mentioned earlier, the image of the traditional and True Woman is portrayed as dynamic and self-directed.⁶⁴ She undertakes the responsibility of making all those around her happy. She is not condemned by her subservience; in fact, “Many talented, exceptional women have found that when their feet are firmly planted on family, their creativity has a comfortable place from which to soar.”⁶⁵

The dynamic role of the True Woman follows classically liberal beliefs that every human actor is capable of procuring her or his own success. Women’s individual success can be measured in their accomplishments as wives and mothers. As evidenced in her advice to Tina, Dr. Laura argues that women can achieve greatness through a careful application of self-discipline and good judgment. In introducing her readers to *Ten Stupid Things Women do to Mess Up Their Lives*, Dr. Laura states, “This is not a self help book, but it will help women help themselves.”⁶⁶ “For self-improvement to happen ...

⁶⁴ Solomon, “The ‘Positive Woman’s’ Journey.”

⁶⁵ Schlessinger, *Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, 27.

⁶⁶ Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things*, xvii.

weaknesses need airing and exercising ... Bottom Line: If you want higher self-esteem, there's only one, admittedly old fashioned, way to get it: Earn it."⁶⁷

Dr. Laura's exhortation for her readers to "earn it" is reminiscent of Bruce's advice to the New American Individual. Both women urge readers "to fight your way out of misery and go take on your life."⁶⁸ Both are also interested in issues of economics and nationhood. For example, Bruce seeks to situate feminism within the classically liberal paradigm of capitalism and commerce. Like Bruce, who suggests that the mark of a good citizen is the ability "to participate, giving an honest effort," Dr. Laura asks one caller, "Don't you think that's everybody's moral obligation? To work as hard as they can to be happy?"⁶⁹ As Bruce associates a type of power feminism as beneficial to America, Dr. Laura's narratives suggest that a return to traditional family values via individualist ideologies is essential to the betterment of the state.

Interestingly, however, Dr. Laura does not personally follow her own advice and she cannot escape her own success—success she achieved while raising her son and also working as a radio personality. At times, she leaves behind her exhortations to true womanhood, switching to a "mothers can do it all and do it well" mentality. In speaking of the working mother, Dr. Laura laments:

I can just feel that ultra-feminists reading this want to knock me upside my head right now with some complaint that woman just haven't been able to do important things because men haven't let them. While I am not going to deny the realities of the male power structure, I do want to reprimand you sternly about passing the

⁶⁷ Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Women Do to Mess Up Their Lives*, xviii–xix.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xxi

⁶⁹ Tammy Bruce, *The New Thought Police: Inside the Left's Assault on Free Speech and Free Minds*, (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2003); 241; Schlessinger, *Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage*, 64.

buck ...it [working motherhood] can be done. If, if, if, you're not lazy or cowardly.⁷⁰

This is a direct contradiction to Dr. Laura's main narratives, where she suggests that women are not well-suited to "do important things" outside the home and should instead focus their efforts on "doing it all" in the home. This contradiction might be attributed to Dr. Laura's commitments to classic liberalism and the excesses of the Cult of True Womanhood. True womanhood limits the female experience to the private sphere, thereby limiting a woman's ability to function as a full citizen of the state. Additionally, when confined to the private sphere, True Womanhood is confined to moral reform where individual change is the key to society's problems.⁷¹ Women's role in a classically liberal state contains a contradiction that becomes apparent when women attempt to transfer their virtue onto society.⁷² For example, when first wave temperance feminists responded to society's vice, they were met by scorn and ridicule. Campbell explains that women "lost their claims to purity and piety" when they entered the public sphere, even when intervening in the name of moral reform.⁷³

Dr. Laura's contradiction may arise from the fact that she is transferring morality onto society via a public radio station and book business—and profiting economically from both. She may lose her moral high ground by compromising her role as a True Woman. To mend the possible tension (which might extend to how her listeners and

⁷⁰ Schlessinger, *Ten Stupid Things Women do to Mess Up Their Lives*, 12–13.

⁷¹ Kristy Maddux, The *da Vinci Code* and the Regressive Gender Politics of Celebrating Women, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25, (2008): 243.

⁷² Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Volume I*.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 10.

readers perceive her message), she may need to resort to a “hybrid” Cult narrative that allows women to experience the public sphere as long as the experience does not hinder their obligations in the private sphere.

While Dr. Laura’s rhetoric can at times present a compromise between public and private spheres, the compromise is premised on her notion that social reform is achieved through individual reform. She allows women limited representation in the public sphere which can be read as a classically liberal feminist position. She maintains that the “radical feminist” need for group orientation distracts women from their individual quests for self-improvement:

“Motherhood and apple pie” once stood for the ultimate gift of being an American in a great country. Now women who choose motherhood feel they risk being viewed as someone who will not work, is lazy or, just can’t cut it in the real world. Many of the SAHMs [Stay At Home Moms] are suffering from feeling undervalued as a person because you chose to stay at home—as though you are no longer a productive person in society and in your home.⁷⁴

Despite the fact that “society” (and the radical feminist) is “out to get” the stay at home mom, Dr. Laura explains that every woman can be a stay at home mom: “everyone’s capable of it. For everything in life, you have to make a priority list. This must be done. If we truly believe in something and cherish it, we find a way to make it happen.”⁷⁵ Female empowerment can be achieved simply through hard work and dedication to self-improvement, regardless of circumstance. Dr. Laura’s argument that women are different from men and therefore are suited to find value inside rather than outside the home is akin to the individualism promoted by both Hoff Sommers and Bruce.

⁷⁴ Schlessinger, *Stay at Home Moms*, 40.

⁷⁵ Schlessinger, “The Mommy Wars.”

However, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the commitment to autonomous individuality ignores unequal distributions of power that continue to subjugate minorities, including women. Medved specifically explores the exclusionary practices of Cult narratives, expounding how these narratives portray the ideal family using a white, heteronormative subject position as the standard for the American family. Medved suggests that remembering family through this perspective negates the alternative and historical realities of family life and ignores the lived experiences of countless populations. She explains:

The ideal family structure prescribed by the cult of domesticity was (and remains) unattainable to many minority men and women: (a) former African American slave families, (b) immigrant families arriving in waves from countries such as China, Ireland, Austria, Hungary, Italy, or Russia at the turn of the 20th century, and (c) other economically deprived families of all races and ethnicities without the ability to survive on one income.⁷⁶

Medved's research suggests that the historical reality of family life in the United States is at odds with Dr. Laura's nostalgic portrayal of family life before feminism. Dr. Laura's narratives, which assume a working husband and a devoted mother and wife, conveniently forget the voices left out of traditional paradigms of home and family. They also ignore the multiple cultural paradigms employed by numerous other families.

As an example, bell hooks addresses the silencing of alternative family experiences in Black communities where the working mother functions as both a site of community and resistance.⁷⁷ Here, the working mother is an honorific figure that makes numerous sacrifices while assuming the role of provider and caregiver. Rather than vilify

⁷⁶ Medved, "Investigating Family Labor," 228.

⁷⁷ bell hooks, "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance," *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, (Boston, MA: South End, 1990): 41-49.

the working mother as incapable of nurturing her children, bell hooks exposes how the working mother is able to successfully administer to both the economic and emotional needs of her family. In contrast, the working Black mother and numerous other family figures are undermined in Cult narratives which accuse her of neglecting the beauty of her gender and family.

Cult narratives also assume a white middle-class subject position in the assignment of parenting roles. A close reading of Dr. Laura's narratives exclusively reveals families that can financially afford to have a parent stay home with children. Not only is this narrative construction of family unrealistic for most Americans, it disproportionately places blame on women, and does not acknowledge the economic conditions that force most parents to simultaneously work and care for their children.⁷⁸

Medved explains that Cult narratives nostalgically remember an American family that never existed, with the exception of a privileged few. The economic reality for most families, especially families of color and lower class families, is one that has never enjoyed the privilege of a stay at home parent. In reality, most women, regardless of color or class, have to work in order to support their families. But, those that can afford to have a parent stay at home with the family are predominantly white, upper-middle class families. Thus, Cult narratives construct a memory of womanhood and family based on a partial, and largely false, notion of the traditional American family while simultaneously creating a standard that is actually far from normal.

⁷⁸ Medved explains that most of the representations of family in Cult narratives are actually unattainable for most Americans.

Collective Memory: Home, Family, and Feminism

Discussed throughout this project, memories are an organizing tool. They help collectivities make sense of an event.⁷⁹ Memories are created through complex social interactions and shared assumptions that link history, philosophy, sociology, and communication in a meaningful manner which reframes a group's past through the lens of the present.⁸⁰ Memories are not simply a retelling of historical events. Memories are partial and political, ideological constructions. Throughout this project, I have explored how memories organize social life in regards to feminism, parsing out how conservative and classically liberal authors use narratives to construct a memory of liberal feminism as radical, and classically liberal feminism as "authentic."

Dr. Laura's memories of feminism can be read as a remembrance of a movement that spreads false messages that turn women into modern day slatterns:

according to Ms. Magazine's Gloria Steinem, "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." With that attitude, women bounce from men to men like a frog in a lily-pond, denying their own need and the value of the marital covenant for their children. Groups of liberal and liberated women proclaim that "parents" can be any combination of adults—it really doesn't matter.⁸¹

Here, Dr. Laura positions feminism as the polar opposite of the family, thereby reaffirming ideological presumptions of the ideal family (white, middle class family) while working simultaneously to undermine feminist efforts.

⁷⁹ Roger L. Simon, *A touch of the past: Remembrance, Learning and Ethics*, (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

⁸⁰ See Carol Blair, "Communication as Collective Memory," in Gregg J. Shepherd, J. St. John and T. Striphos *Communication as... Perspectives on Theory*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006): 51–60; Kendall R. Phillips, ed., *Framing Public Memory*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004): 115–144; Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12, (1995): 214–239.

⁸¹ Schlessinger, "How Low Can Women Go?"

Dr. Laura's memories reify the classically liberal principles found in Cult ideologies by foregrounding women's "nature" and forgetting their (and their family's) diversity, thus limiting the possibilities of female representation.⁸² The exclusive nature of remembering reveals the pervasiveness of hegemonic power wielded by dominant narratives. Memories become a site of identification for individuals to locate themselves within the dominant group's narrative. They are also a tool for defining one's friends and one's enemies. The antagonist (liberal/radical feminist) in Dr. Laura's narrative is critical in developing identification. The liberal/radical feminist serves as the catalyst to the loss of women's virtue and the state's loss of classically liberal values. In constructing "the enemy," readers are able to identify with Dr. Laura: they are moral and virtuous individuals, united against the social antagonist (feminists). Dr. Laura punishes her audience for their poor behaviors, but also nurtures them by offering common sense solutions to their problems (e.g., Jerry and Tina's marriage), in the form of Cult ideologies.

Cult narratives work constitutively to create a space for true womanhood to emerge as a viable option for modern women to embody. At the same time, Cult narratives can deny alternative female experiences, both socially and historically. This is because there is a marked absence in Cult narratives of the *actual* lived experiences of women throughout history.⁸³ A critical look at Dr. Laura's rhetoric reveals how she remembers a particular mode of classically liberal American life. This memory functions

⁸² Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 3, (2006): 27-47.

⁸³ Medved, "Investigating Family Labor."

as an “age of innocence” narrative which places the nuclear family at the center of American society.

Dr. Laura situates the Cult narrative as a taken for granted premise. Her reliance on socio-economic presuppositions assumes a middle class figure within a middle class family. This memory of the family creates a collective memory that positions feminism as an unnatural and radical option for women. Dr. Laura states:

It is so sad that feminism demoted that singularly magical ability of women to transform deflated men into heroes and warriors into a notion of massaging the frail, pathetic ego of a weak man. In doing so, feminism robbed women of one of their most blessed abilities in life: the ability to not only create life in their wombs, but to sustain that life force in their husbands.⁸⁴

The radical feminist has castrated the hero of classically liberal philosophies. Without the strong father figure that Dr. Laura remembers as the head of the American family, society will crumble. As women take their husband’s places as protectors and providers, they overturn the foundation of American culture (the social contract). In an effort to save women, families, and by default the country, Dr. Laura encourages women to unite against feminism—to take back their husbands, their families, and their sense of virtue. She tells women that they have been duped by feminists to accept the colossal lie that life outside the home can be in any way as gratifying as life within.

Drawing Conclusions: Collective Memory and Social Movements

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested that Dr. Laura’s critique of modern feminism and the retreat of the traditional family rely on her recollections of the 1960s and 1970s feminist activism. Like both Bruce and Hoff Sommers, Dr. Laura presents a selective memory of 1960s and 1970s feminism and defines liberal activism as radical.

⁸⁴ Laura Schlessinger, *The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage*, 24.

But defining a social movement is difficult. What a movement “is,” what it “does,” what its “goals” are, and so on, is often the subject of much debate by those who participate in the movement, those outside the movement, and by those who study the movement. What is perhaps more productive than seeking a concrete definition of a social movement like feminism is the exploration of the various meanings a social movement holds for various social groups.⁸⁵ In this case, the “facts” of a movement are secondary to what the movement means to authors like Dr. Laura and their audiences. Specifically, what do rhetors mean when they use terms such as “radical feminism” and the type of feminism they refer to as “true” or “original” feminism? All three authors explored in this project engage in a battle over the “true” definition of feminism, which suggests that one’s definition of feminism does matter.

Specifically, in defining what feminism truly “is,” all three authors can claim to be feminists by showing how they prescribe to feminism itself—and how they are working to “save” or “reclaim” it. While my views of feminism differ quite dramatically from all of those offered by Hoff Sommers, Bruce and Dr. Laura, my commitment to the collectivist nature of feminism forces me to struggle with completely denying their “feminist” claims. To suggest that one feminism (i.e., “my” feminism) holds the high ground as a definition of the movement seems hypocritical at best. Perhaps the idea that true feminism is a collective endeavor is the only common trait between the many feminisms discussed in this project. As evidenced by the (classically) liberal feminism of the first wave, which was collective in its search for individual rights, our differences in

⁸⁵ Michael C. McGee, “Social Movement: Phenomenon or Meaning?” in C. E. Morris and S. H. Brown, eds., *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001): 125-136.

our commitments do not exclude feminists from being in conversation with one another. One of American feminism's enduring qualities is the broad diversity that has allowed the movement to grow beyond its original purpose (individual rights).

If this is true, then collective memory allows critics to look at memories of feminism and gain some insight into the hegemonic battle that is waged over the definition of a complex movement. Examining Dr. Laura's sense of the past reveals the symbolic resources employed by a classically liberal community and the history, hierarchies, and aspirations the community holds.⁸⁶

While I can commit to a collective understanding of feminism, I cannot deny that Dr. Laura's narratives grossly foreclose possibilities for the feminine subject position. Her narratives are both deliberative and constitutive, forcing women to choose between true womanhood or feminism while at the same time constituting the former as natural and the latter as a radical, misguided, and out-of-date social movement. Feminism bears the responsibility for female subjugation: "Women have always had the power over men; but feminism got women off the track of realizing that, and on the track to only hating or disdaining men."⁸⁷

Misandry is critical to Dr. Laura's argument making it difficult to engage her narratives in feminist conversation:

Women give themselves sexually to men out of love, a desperate desire to be wanted and loved, or for money. It is not typical, as it is with men, for a woman to feel proud of the number of men who have penetrated her; and the only women who look for the sexual challenge are those so twisted with anti-male rage that

⁸⁶ Stephen H. Brown, "Reading Public Memory in Daniel Webster's Plymouth Rock *Oration*," *Western Journal of Communication*, 57, 464-477, (1993).

⁸⁷ Schlessinger, "Am I Anti-Female?"

domination of a male is a form of psychological rape which satisfies that neurotic anger.⁸⁸

Dr. Laura's rhetoric is not the first of its kind. Throughout the 1970s and into the 1990s, many groups (e.g., "Total Woman" and STOP ERA) organized to combat the changes feminism brought to society. Termed by many as "feminist backlash," these groups, like Dr. Laura, often included reoccurring themes of both misandry and misogyny in their rhetoric and reframed feminism as a gender essentialist movement.⁸⁹ Feminist backlash, as explained by Wood, includes "popular book writers who scapegoat feminism as the source of problems ranging from [women's] loneliness to delinquent children."⁹⁰

Backlash rhetoric urges women to embrace their natural roles. It also portrays women who work outside the home as selfish and uncaring and associates problems within the family with the loss of the virtuous mother and loving wife. Dr. Laura's penchant for blaming women's dissatisfaction on feminism, portraying feminism as a man-hating, essentialist movement, and framing social problems as moral dilemmas appears to follow backlash arguments. Addressing them as "feminist" may be even more difficult.

As a popular author, Dr. Laura recreates patriarchy by assigning feminine power as something to be achieved only through women's natural subordination to men. In short, Dr. Laura's narratives assume the traditional tone of Cult narratives by suggesting women have a natural power—it is just a different form of power than that possessed by males. Unfortunately, this argument does little to liberate women from oppression,

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Soloman, "The 'Positive Woman's' Journey."

⁹⁰ Julia T. Wood, *Gendered Lives: Communication Gender and Culture*, (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003): 96.

especially when that different feminine power is incarcerated in “natural” gender relations as laid out by the Cult of True Womanhood. It remains true that the same theories of difference espoused by Cult narratives are those that undergird cultural attitudes that value male experiences over female. Additionally, the form of power afforded to women through Cult narratives is a subversive or coercive form of power. This is to suggest that, as Dr. Laura states, “Men will only do what women allow,” acting as though men have power when they are truly ruled by their wives and mothers.⁹¹ This very argument is often used against women, suggesting they are “underhanded” in their dealings with men, using “trickery” to get men to behave in certain ways (e.g., the *femme fatale*). Additionally, the idea that women covertly use power, rather than wield it legitimately (or “normally”), supports many of the patriarchal claims that women are not suited for public participation—an ideology present in many modern organizations. The idea that feminists hate men widens the gap between the classically liberal feminist and the radical feminist, making it more difficult to engage in collectivist activism. Feminists need to engage in conversations that can respond to feminist backlash without relinquishing the collectivist nature of the movement.

To conclude, when joined with the other narratives mentioned in this project, Dr. Laura’s historical description of feminism engages in a struggle over the “true” definition of the movement. Interestingly, this struggle seems to have less to do with the actual state of women’s oppression and more to do with political commitments to conservatism. I contend that the battle over the true definition of feminism is less relevant to women’s subjugation than dealing with oppression itself. Judith Butler argues:

⁹¹ Schlessinger, “Am I Anti-Woman?”

If identities were no longer fixed as the premise of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old.⁹²

Butler suggests that feminists leave behind identity politics that rely on definitions of “woman” or “feminist” as the only site of agreement and constancy. Instead, Butler argues that the future of feminism should look seriously toward questioning the history of the movement’s key terms. As I turn to my conclusion, I offer the possibility of moving beyond identifying traits that makes one feminist or not, and look more to oppressive practices and taken-for-granted realities that subjugate women in the first place, as the “basis” for feminist activism in a “post-feminist” era.

⁹² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York, NY: Routledge Classics, 2006): 203.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: How the Battle over the Definition of a “True” Feminism Distracts Feminists from the Problem of Women’s Oppression

Throughout this dissertation, I have referenced a “collective memory” of feminism that remembers the liberal feminism of the 1960s and 1970s as a radical form of activism. In exploring the constitutive and deliberative qualities of conservative narratives, I have argued that Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers, Tammy Bruce, and Dr. Laura Schlessinger unify their audiences in the struggle against liberal/radical feminism. Identification is a key tool for these authors, as they help individual audience members see themselves as part of a larger collectivity. The symbolic resources that the authors employ (individualism, patriotism, reason) expose the histories, hierarchies, and aspirations of a moral conservative and classically liberal community. The shared knowledge that passes through Hoff Sommers’, Bruce’s, and Dr. Laura’s narratives can be viewed as a conservative response to a crisis of feminine identity, where what it means to be a woman and/or a feminist in a classically liberal state becomes a site of contention.

I have demonstrated that Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Schlessinger constrain feminist thought and practice through traditional matrices that maintain and sustain modern patriarchal power structures. Their narratives of feminism reveal a web of hegemonic power that extends to the political, social, and individual identities of women and plays a constitutive role in how we understand feminism. Their remembering

advances conservatism, as is evidenced through the authors' enforcement of traditional values coupled with the economic (capitalist) benefits of liberty and individuality. Radical/liberal feminism is remembered as subversive to the classically liberal virtues that maintain society. It is portrayed as a danger to the stability of the social milieu of the United States.

In this chapter, I argue that all three authors constitute a new post-feminist community by remembering feminism in classically liberal ways. Implicit in post-feminism is the notion that equality for women has become a common sense, unquestionable and unproblematic right—the need for feminism has passed. Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Dr. Laura can be described as post-feminists in some contexts. However, all three women state, in one form or another, that a classically liberal feminism is still necessary. In this chapter, I explore the concept of post-feminism and the eagerness of each author to disavow the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. In opposition to their claims, I argue that even when feminism is reduced to the quest for equal individual rights (which, for these authors, has already been satisfied), women remain underprivileged in the United States and the concept that “women have never had it so good,” is not good enough.

Additionally, my conclusion addresses how the narratives of Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Schlessinger work within larger hegemonic discourses to form a collective memory that excludes other memories of feminism. I have demonstrated how a classically liberal memory of feminism largely disregards or even promotes the realities of oppression in a patriarchal society. Using collective memory to expose the pervasive

nature of shared remembrance, I have attempted to unpack the hegemonic constraints these narratives place on gender and gender performance.

In this chapter, I discuss the implications of a collective memory that disciplines feminism so holistically, and contemplate how we could remember differently. I assume that what a society remembers about feminism—including the narratives it employs to convey the meaning of feminism—reveals contemporary post-feminist attitudes. By closely exploring what authors like Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Dr. Laura remember about feminism, we may consider what the future might hold for the feminist movement if we abandon the debate over what feminism “is” or who feminists “are” and by implication “are not.” As an alternative, I suggest that feminism focus its activism on the oppression that all women continue to endure. To identify is to define the parameters of the collectivity—who is and who is not invited to participate. While identification will always distance feminist activists from one another, we can be in conversation and have at least one common trait—the collective endeavor to alleviate women’s oppression.

In the following sections, I summarize Hoff Sommers’, Bruce’s, and Schlessinger’s positions on feminism. I discuss how identification works as a tool that builds consubstantiality within a social movement and offer my suggestions on how other feminists can engage in conversations with these admittedly problematic concepts of feminism and womanhood. I argue that for women in the United States, the scope of oppression may have changed since the first and second wave activists sought liberation, but that oppression has not necessarily diminished. I unpack the reality of power imbalances that continue to constrain gender and the consequences of foreclosing possibilities for feminist activism.

Review: Re-membering a Liberal Feminism in a Post-Feminist Context

Post-feminism refers to the undermining of feminist activism (particularly from the 1960s and 1970s) through a series of discursive strategies that label feminism socially irrelevant.¹ McRobbie explains that post-feminist texts are responsible for “undoing of feminism, while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intended response to feminism.”² Post-feminist texts “undo” feminism through rhetoric, as McRobbie explains: “by means of the tropes of freedom and choice which are now inextricably connected with the category of ‘young women,’ feminism is decisively aged and made to seem redundant.”³ Gamble suggests that “the post feminist debate tends to crystallize around issues of victimization, autonomy and responsibility.”⁴ In a post-feminist world, “Feminism is cast into the shadows, where at best it can expect to have some afterlife, where it might be regarded ambivalently by those young women who must in more public venues state a distance from it, for the sake of social and sexual recognition.”⁵

Hoff Sommers’, Bruce’s, and Schlessinger’s narratives are examples of post-feminist texts, but what makes them remarkable is their appearance as *memories*, particularly narratives designed to re-member feminism as classically liberal. They speak transgenerationally, altering the perceptions of women who experienced second wave

¹ Angela McRobbie, “Post-Feminism and Popular Culture,” *Feminist Media Studies*, 4, (2004): 255–264.

² *Ibid.*, 255.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Sarah Gamble, *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Post Feminism*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2002): 36

⁵ McRobbie, “Post-Feminism and Popular Culture,” 255.

feminism and those too young to personally remember the movement. Through the authors' memories, women, both young and old, are given a new way to interpret feminism and that interpretation is often negative. Griffin explains how cultural narratives can shape collective memories of social movements. Using McGee, Griffin concludes that social movement is certainly *meaning*—human consciousness, especially for those who were not alive to experience the movement.⁶ Griffin articulates that “movement-as-memory is itself a conviction, a consciousness, the end result of a process of persuasion.”⁷ Through narratives, Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Dr. Laura persuade their audience that a feminist movement existed, but in its “truest” form it was classically liberal, shaping the memory of the movement in post-feminist ways. The result is a movement-as-memory that persuades women who lived through second wave feminism and those that were born after the second wave to disengage themselves from feminism.

In this section, I briefly summarize Hoff Sommers', Bruce's, and Dr. Laura's memories of feminism. In readdressing their primary arguments, I reveal the highly political nature of remembrance and point to how their post-feminist memories maintain traditional gender matrices. In Chapter One, I first argued that in representing or altering the past, narratives have the ability to affect the future.⁸ My argument is that these narratives invoke classically liberal principles of freedom and choice to prove that feminism is no longer needed; but at the same time, the narratives reify a classically

⁶Charles J.G. Griffin, “Movement as Memory: Significant form in *Eyes on The Prize*, *Communication Studies*, 54, (2003) 196–211.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁸ Ali Behdad, *A Forgetful Nation: On Immigration and Cultural Identity in the United States*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

liberal feminist identity (e.g., the suffragist, equity feminist, authentic feminist, or in the case of Dr. Laura, the True Woman). Their definitions undermine the realities of female oppression. The result of their memories can be seen in a generation of women who renounce feminism as either an excess or a menace.

Christina Hoff Sommers: Memories of the Suffragist

Hoff Sommers espouses classically liberal feminist beliefs of equality and individual rights. She assumes that feminism was a necessary step in procuring women's equal rights, but also argues that, for the most part, modern women have achieved "parity" with men. She articulates that the continued efforts of feminism in the modern era are largely unnecessary, or perhaps over-exaggerated.

Hoff Sommers suggests that feminism became irrelevant the moment it "left behind" its classically liberal principles and espoused the "radical belief" in sexual classes. She suggests that liberal/radical feminists rely on a false belief in a patriarchal hierarchy that continues to discriminate against women. She demonstrates the folly of believing that women are the victims of systemic male oppression, revealing the "weaknesses" of modern liberal/radical feminist positions. She offers her readers a reprieve from the overzealous "gender feminists" by suggesting women can find "true" liberation through a careful application of their individual rights and self-empowerment:

I don't really think we need an alternative vision [of feminism]. I think we have a very fine vision already—it's called "equity feminism." It's the classical feminism that got us the suffrage, that got us equity in education, that continues to get us equality of opportunity. That is the feminism I believe in.⁹

⁹ Christina Hoff Sommers, interview by Scott London, "The Future of Feminism: An Interview with Christina Hoff Sommers," retrieved July 9, 2009, from <http://www.scottlondon.com/interviews/sommers.html>.

Hoff Sommers offers female empowerment through the classically liberal principle of autonomous individuality, which assumes all persons are free to better their social condition. She realizes the realities of female oppression (in that classically liberal philosophers admit that in a classically liberal state, oppression still exists); but the consequences of oppression are portrayed in terms of the individual's abilities to overcome them. In the spirit of post-feminism, Hoff Sommers offers liberation through individual fortitude. In short, it is not society that limits the individual; it is the individual's inability to recognize the opportunities of a classically liberal state that renders some women less successful than others.

In Chapter Two, I argued that while classically liberal thought provides a certain degree of freedom, from a feminist perspective, this political theory fails in its quest for autonomous individuality in regard to gender. Historically, classic liberalism has provided the support for patriarchal assumptions that women are naturally irrational creatures, and reveals a preference for male experiences. Female subjugation has often been deemed natural and necessary in the classically liberal state to protect women from the evils of the public sphere. While Hoff Sommers' narratives may appear liberating, I argue that they force women to operate within a discursive framework that views the female subject position as lacking. Hoff Sommers' narratives offer women a "way out" of oppression, without critiquing the patriarchal conditions that sustain their oppression in the first place. Liberation comes through assimilation where women are rewarded for "getting over" their subjugation and joining the public sphere on masculine terms.

Hoff Sommers remembers a "true" feminism through a nostalgic reminiscing of the suffrage movement, where change is achieved through an application of the state's

laws (i.e., the suffragists used the Constitution to argue for equal rights). In stark contrast, she remembers radical/liberal feminism as a movement that subverts both the state's laws and its virtues. She fosters identification through a feminist subject position that is reminiscent of the suffragist (equity feminist). She juxtaposes the suffragist with modern feminists, defining the latter as the "enemy." Her definitions of villain (gender feminist) and hero (equity feminist) helps to move her audience towards accepting assimilation as a proper feminist goal and encourages readers to identify in the struggle against liberal/radical feminism.

Importantly, in Chapter Two I also revealed that Hoff Sommers' memory of suffrage is a partial memory of first wave feminism. I offered another memory, demonstrating how suffragists can be remembered in radical ways: Many suffragists denounced sexual subjugation through an implicit belief in sexual classes and an explicit need for society to recognize women as equals. Suffrage rhetoric reveals that equality could only happen if the prevailing beliefs of gender changed—society had to recognize women as rational and capable of reason in order to grant them the right to vote. Hoff Sommers' failure to recognize the radical component in suffrage is indicative of the partial and political nature of remembrance. She remembers part of the suffrage argument and distances the movement from its radical leanings, fostering identification with contemporary conservatism.

Hoff Sommers also remembers the liberal feminism of the 1960s and 1970s in partial ways, infusing her rhetoric with modern examples of "irrational" feminist activism. This supports her claims that feminism in the modern era is either out-of-date, or unrepresentative of the modern and rational woman's needs. Parsing together

examples of radical feminism that her readership is unlikely to identify with and shaping her memory to portray 1960s and 1970s feminism as irrational, Hoff Sommers redefines feminism as a radical movement. Her memories of the 1960s and 1970s feminist activism further distances radical feminism from suffrage—and further moves her readers toward identification with a post-feminist position.

Tammy Bruce: The New American Individual and the Authentic Feminist

Like Hoff Sommers, Tammy Bruce creates, through narratives, a dialectical relationship between feminism and classically liberal thought. She casts the radical feminist as antithesis to the autonomous individual. Bruce's narratives use memories of twentieth century feminism to condemn the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the liberal feminist leadership. Similar to Hoff Sommers, Bruce writes in post-feminist hues, suggesting that the suffrage movement was a necessary step in women's liberation; but in the years following suffrage, the "feminist establishment" no longer represents the needs of most American women.

Bruce's critique of feminism is an example of a larger conservative discourse that seeks to ease the tension between classically liberal and morally conservative beliefs. In an attempt to unite her constituency against the "new class" of feminist elite, Bruce portrays feminism as anti-American and reveals the modern movement's "socialist" leanings. Bruce portrays herself as a reformed feminist and lesbian who is able to see beyond her gender and her sexuality. Bruce uses the concept of change through individual reform to bridge the gap between free marketers (classic liberals) and moral/religious conservatives. As a token lesbian, she exemplifies how the reformed

individual prospers in the opportunistic society we live in, and reprimands minority populations for “not doing their part” in breaking free from their own oppression.

For Bruce, capitalism is the vehicle for national prosperity, and as a component of capitalism, autonomous individuality is crucial to the betterment of the state. Bruce explains that modern feminism is a threat to the state because it promotes “group theories” of victimhood. Bruce’s attacks on the collectivist nature of feminism reveal an unwillingness to believe that women are members of a subjugated group. As an example, Bruce mocks consciousness-raising as a form of recovery for abused women, suggesting that feminists fail to “reintegrate” women into society. She tells women that true feminist activism helps the individual: “face your issues, deal with them, get the help you need and rejoin life. Not as a victim, mind you, but as your ordinary self.”¹⁰ Bruce’s individualism reveals a post-feminist attitude that denies a need for group identification. Women are suffering, in Bruce’s opinion, but not to an extent that justifies collective activism. Rather, women need a feminism that can help them recognize their own inherent power as individuals. Bruce’s push toward individuality allows her to carve a space for classically liberal feminism in a post-feminist society, where the power of the individual woman replaces collectivist activism.

Dr. Laura: Sustaining Classical Liberalism with the “True Woman’s” Virtue

Dr. Laura’s memories of feminism are also flavored with individualism, capitalism, and patriotism. She agrees with both Hoff Sommers and Bruce that the individual is ultimately responsible for his or her own success. Her narratives also foster

¹⁰ Tammy Bruce, *The Death of Right and Wrong: Exposing the Left’s Assault on Our Culture and Values*, (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press): 28–29.

polarized subject positions. However, Dr. Laura's narratives go further by employing moral ideologies that articulate the true nature of women and their role in society; in contrast to the "unnatural" liberal/radical feminist.

Dr. Laura's narratives are unique in their ideological treatment of feminism. Unlike Hoff Sommers and Bruce, who espouse the classically liberal feminist position that men and women are essentially alike and therefore require equal rights and opportunities, Dr. Laura feels women are essentially different from men. For Dr. Laura, legal equality is important to the notion of female empowerment—it makes "good business"—but the idea that women should be free from patriarchal oppression goes against the natural order. She argues that patriarchy is a natural social condition, and that women find their true power as man's helpmate.

Dr. Laura reassigns the classically liberal concepts of individuality and reason to the natural roles of motherhood and wifhood, portraying both roles as dynamic and self-directed. Essentially, Dr. Laura's argument takes the ironic stance that, for women, there is power in submission. Women hold the key to their liberation in their natural roles, which are always subservient to men. Men may feel that they have the ultimate power, but will only do what their mothers and wives allow them to do. If a man oppresses his wife or mother, it is either because she has acted inappropriately (i.e., has not met his needs), or she is weak and has allowed "her men" to misuse her. In either case, her subjugation is a result of her own behavior:

If you want to feel more in control of your situations in families, neighborhoods, jobs, etc., then you first have to look inside yourself and see what YOU are doing

that you shouldn't be ...or what you are NOT doing that you should be! This is where the power to change everything comes in.¹¹

Together with Hoff Sommers and Bruce, Dr. Laura uses liberal/radical feminism as the exigency for the failure of modern feminist activism. In over-emphasizing the “excesses” of some feminist activism—especially the activism occurring in the 1960s and 1970s—these authors illustrate how a collective memory of liberal/radical feminism performs the patient and tenacious rhetorical duties that reinforce heterogeneous ambitions of the dominant bloc. They are also an example of how groups with opposing commitments (i.e., classic liberals and moral conservatives) can be united through hegemony. In describing Gramsci's theory of hegemony Foust explains, “by linking issues, ideas, and identities, a coalition [can] emerge, eventually growing into a larger hegemonic bloc.”¹² I argue that these authors represent a conservative hegemonic bloc that links women's oppression and classic liberalism with a definition of “true” feminist activism. The authors constitute a community of virtuous women and individuals against feminists.

The conservative coalition takes women's participation in the public sphere for granted and thus renders feminism irrelevant. As Hoff Sommers states, “I think we need a certain amount of grace in victory. If we are now 55 percent of college enrollments, do we really need to have all these advocates to improve women's educational opportunities?”¹³ Hoff Sommers, Bruce and Dr. Laura invite women (young and old) to

¹¹ Laura Schlessinger, “Is ‘Personal Responsibility’ a Four-Letter Word?” *Dr. Laura's Blog*, retrieved July 9, 2009, from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/category/infidelity/>.

¹² Christina R. Foust, “Aesthetics as Weapons in the ‘War of Ideas:’ Exploring the Digital and Typographic in American Conservative Web Sites,” *Southern Communication Journal*, 73, (2008): 136.

¹³ Christina Hoff Sommers, “The Future of Feminism.”

see themselves as liberated individuals and to view feminism as a historical movement—once necessary, but sorely out of date and even dangerous to the American family, economy, and nation. I argue that their post-feminist invitation is premature.

McRobbie explains that the post-feminist tendency toward “female individualism” too quickly forgets and takes for granted the struggles earlier feminists endured to procure a space in the public sphere: “There is little trace of the battles fought, of the power struggles embarked upon, or of the enduring inequities which still mark out the relations between men and women.”¹⁴ Because women now experience political emancipation, the subjugation that women continue to face is forgotten. Women’s presence in the public sphere serves as proof of woman’s liberation. What makes Hoff Sommers’, Bruce’s and Dr. Laura’s post-feminism noteworthy is that they do not take first wave feminism for granted. They remember it in their own classically liberal ways. However, where they honor the suffragist and her activism, they malign the second wave—particularly as its leaders have entrenched themselves as an anti-individual elite today. The power struggles over gender that marked 1960s and 1970s activism are either mentioned in passing, or rendered unnecessary and extreme.

The consequence of these conservative (and post-feminist) discursive frameworks is that they wrongly assume that political emancipation equals liberation. Women are active members of the public sphere in most Western societies, but the way they are “called into being” reflects that a woman is “problematically ‘she,’ rather than an unproblematic ‘we.’”¹⁵ This is to suggest that women enter into the public sphere as

¹⁴ McRobbie, “Post-Feminism and Popular Culture,” 260.

¹⁵ Ibid.

autonomous individuals who by definition will be rewarded for their individual merit as contributors to society. However, by a woman's sheer femaleness, she is a site of contestation: "Young women are a good investment, they can be trusted with micro-credit, they are privileged subjects of social change."¹⁶ But, for post-feminists, these women must enter the sphere by embodying white, heteronormative, masculine traits. They have been invited to "play the game" but "the terms of [their] great expectations on the part of governments are that young women must do without more autonomous feminist politics."¹⁷ Feminism is overshadowed (displaced) along with gender and the challenging matrices women must navigate in order to participate in the public sphere. A classically liberal feminist perspective is problematic because women's achievement is measured by individual female success (autonomous individuality). Unfortunately, the "common sense" of women's participation in the public sphere distracts classically liberal feminists from examining what women are forced to give up if they are to fit the prerequisites for participation (i.e., the male standard of citizenship).

The brunt of post-feminism certainly falls on those minority women who continue to suffer the most severe subjugation. Classically liberal feminism can do little to liberate women of color and the poor, as it offers empowerment through white male characteristics which are difficult for minority women to emulate. The exclusion of minority experiences represents the danger in foreclosing alternative possibilities for feminist activism. If feminism is over, or is only appropriate when advancing very normative concepts of gender that in many cases reinforce patriarchal practices, what

¹⁶ Ibid., 258.

¹⁷ Ibid.

options are available for today's forgotten women for whom white male standards are the driving force behind their subjugation?

A homogenous population that favors the white, bourgeois male as the standard of citizenship and measures all other subject positions against him inevitably creates unequal distributions of power. No matter how successful, women are always something "other than" the ideal citizen—a situation that is compounded for women of minority populations who must negotiate dueling identities of "woman" and "minority." There is a hierarchy of citizenship in the United States that cannot (or at least has not) been questioned by social movements that seek change through individual reform (i.e., assimilation). Instead, the classically liberal principle of the "general will" has worked to maintain traditional matrices of power. As the twenty-first century continues, the white male standard of citizenship will continue to be challenged by emerging global identities. Women will undoubtedly be a part of those challenges. Citizenship will continue to grant women the right to vote, but there is and will continue to be a need for a feminism that recognizes the "problems" created by a woman's sexual class, race, and economic disparity.

Consequences of Remembering: Foreclosure and Censure

The authors in this project reveal the consequences of remembering feminism as discrete waves rather than a complex and polysemic movement. A feminist position that engages the intricacies of feminist activism may help the movement move beyond competing ideologies (like classical liberalism) that prevent feminists from interacting with one another. As Dow explains:

Rhetorical theory and criticism are inherently pluralistic. The same is true for feminism, although we too seldom acknowledge this in our usage of the term. There is room for myriad feminist practices in this field, and the purpose of being more specific about our assumptions is not to establish which feminist practice or theory is most legitimate. Rather, when we acknowledge the rich variety of its bases, the feminist knowledge that we create will be more informed, more complete, and more powerful, both within this discipline and outside.¹⁸

Feminist critics should proceed with an open mind about what feminism is and what feminist activism looks like. Additionally, as a discipline, we should be open to critique of our competing ideologies. In the quest for legitimization, feminist scholars should not feel threatened by competing feminist theories. However, that does not mean feminist scholars should not question positions on gender that uphold or reinforce patriarchy.

A visible consequence of the narratives represented in this project is their ability to pass as unproblematic feminist texts. Both Bruce and Hoff Sommers identify as feminists; and Dr. Laura states, “I’m all for feminists ...in their place, of course,” which suggests she supports feminism that upholds traditional female roles or classically liberal activism that supports equality for all individuals.¹⁹ There is also a tendency, especially for Hoff Sommers and Bruce, to be labeled as “good feminists” in the popular media. Dow suggests that there is a “naiveté about feminist theory” that lends to the belief that a text falls under the heading “feminist rhetoric” as long as it focuses on gender and references female empowerment.²⁰ This tendency minimizes the complexity of feminism and ignores the numerous points of intersectionality found in feminist thought and theory.

¹⁸ Bonnie J. Dow, “Feminism, Difference(s), and Rhetorical Studies,” *Communication Studies*, 46, (1995): 114.

¹⁹ Laura Schlessinger, “Feminists Should Go Where They are Needed,” *Dr. Laura’s Blog*, retrieved February 23, 2009 from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/category/feminism/>.

²⁰ Bonnie J. Dow, “Feminism, Difference(s),” 111.

For example, race, sexuality and socio-economic status are intersecting differences among women that are often ignored when feminists view “difference” only terms of the differences that exists between men and women. Empowerment is limited to liberating women in terms of their subjugation to men rather than addressing how differences among women affect their oppression.

Additionally, labeling any and all feminine discourse as “feminist” risks “doing a disservice to readers who hope to learn something about feminist theory or politics.”²¹ In speaking to feminisms that limit women in their choice of identification and gender representation, Dow cautions that “such a position reifies the very definitions used to oppress and exclude women from public life, to devalue their labor, and to enforce ‘womanly’ behavior.”²² In short, this project’s authors limit the female subject to two competing possibilities, and almost always undermine feminist aims that do not fit within classically liberal paradigms. I do not deny that “There is room for myriad feminist practices.”²³ However, I contend that feminist criticism must carefully question those positions that “were created by patriarchy and can be used to sustain it.”²⁴

McGee, in fact, calls for social movement scholarship to be critical of the power structures and ideologies inherent to social movements. He calls on critics to note the points of contention, or difference, in social movements in order to better understand how discourse flows among and between a movement’s members, affecting change in

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 114.

²⁴ Ibid.

attitudes and beliefs over time. In understanding the hegemonic practices taking place within the movement, we better understand what the movement means across groups.

Defining “true feminism” is the impetus behind Hoff Sommers’, Bruce’s, and Dr. Laura’s memories. With each woman, there is something at stake, should their definition of feminism or womanhood not be accepted as the dominant definition. Most notably, all three provide vivid examples of social consequences of radical feminism which rejects autonomous individuality or true womanhood. The movement is too subversive. Hoff Sommers notes how radical feminism undermines classically liberal education; Bruce demonstrates how radical feminism threatens the security of the state; Dr. Laura exposes how it has destroyed the natural order and American families. From despotism to chaos, radical feminism is dangerous. Therefore, their understanding of a feminism that brings about social change without unraveling the social order becomes a moral crusade, a conservative response to liberal and radical feminism.

I argue for a different memory of feminism and expose what is at stake when we accept without question, a classically liberal feminism. I recommend feminists continue to move away from centralized definitions of feminism (i.e., liberal, suffragist, radical, cultural, authentic, equity, etc.). I say “continue” because feminists have been decentralizing the meaning of “woman” and “feminist” for some time. Butler, for instance, urges feminists to do away with identity politics in *Gender Trouble*, a book that is now over a decade old.

I recognize that identity politics, especially for minority feminists, is important and provides alternatives to a white, middle class woman’s perspective of oppression. However, I also argue that a position that moves away from identity politics does not

deny the importance of identifying as a member of the group. A more “radical democratic” feminist position, as Butler would call it, highlights the highly political nature of identification. It cautions feminists from uncritically accepting the identity of “woman” or “type of feminist” as positions to organize around, and instead encourages women to recognize and question the political choices and social realities that make up our identities. Radical democracy asks us to look at oppression, not definition.

Butler suggests that identification is a complex and political process that can force the term “women” into inflexible definitions of femininity. Similarly, she argues that the meaning of feminism is restricted when feminists assume that the terms they use to describe themselves (liberal, radical, cultural, etc.) are without political complications.²⁵ Stuart Hall explains that terms are never fixed—they are always assuming new meanings and can never be completely separated from previous histories.²⁶ For example, the term woman will always be associated with historical definitions of irrationality and unreasonableness. Hall warns that one can never know what effects the history of a term will have on a collectivity as it moves into the future. Butler reassigns Hall’s notion of meaning to women and feminism by suggesting that definitions can never adequately capture or exhaust the vibrancy and complexity of what it means to be a woman, and are thus not fully adequate for understanding oppression.²⁷

Moreover, as this dissertation has demonstrated, identity politics takes feminists out of conversation with each other and forecloses the possibilities for feminist activism.

²⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (Routledge Classics, 2006).

²⁶ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, *Theorizing Diaspora*, (Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

²⁷ Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

There is a problem when authors argue that modern feminists (like members of NOW) and suffragists have nothing in common. When we identify as a certain “type” of feminist, we take on a political identity that motivates us to action.²⁸ Authentic feminism, for instance, motivates women to reject victimhood, but also puts authentic feminist voices at odds with other feminist positions. Our group membership comes to define us as being different from another group and organizes our activism as apart from other activists.

The failure to understand the complexity of identification often results in the failure to question the restrictive practices that define what “types” of women or what kind of practices are allowed in particular definitions of woman and feminist. For example, Hoff Sommers’ and Bruce’s memories of suffrage and the second wave fail to question the white, heteronormative standard put forth by equity feminism and the New American Individual. Dr. Laura’s True Womanhood fails to question how true women uphold traditional virtues that reinforce their subjugation. Throughout feminist history, the failure to recognize the complexity of the movement has resulted in a large number of women, specifically minority and working class women, to be “left out” of feminist dialogues. If we are uncritical of the particular politics that shape our identities, we may inadvertently reproduce the oppressive systems feminism seeks to dismantle.²⁹

²⁸ Linda Martin Alcoff, “Who’s Afraid of Identity Politics?” in Paula Moya and Michael Hames-Garcia, *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, (University of California Press, 2000).

²⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

As an answer, Butler sends feminism into the “democratic cacophony of its identity.”³⁰ She encourages feminism to engage in the “difficult labor of translation” where feminists take part in lively, public, and democratic debate that replaces the static definitions of woman and feminism. Collective memory is an important part of this process for me to locate alternative memories that support pluralistic feminist identities in the present.³¹ This debate establishes relationships between the vast feminist identities that comprise the movement. It does not equate to a simple unification of feminist positions, but recognizes differences and unpacks problematic politics.³²

For example, in addressing backlash feminism, a radical democratic approach would look to the intersections that connect backlash positions to other feminist positions (e.g., it might be appropriate for feminism to recognize the empowerment women feel as autonomous agents). A radical democratic approach would also point to the problematic politics of individuality that reinforce patriarchy, as a critique of backlash positions. From a radical democratic position, feminists would move away from the common definitions of identity (i.e., what is a feminist) to engage in the work of eliminating oppression. Importantly, from a radical democratic position, oppression does not have to arise from feminism, but can come from any situation where people experience subjugation. Radical democracy can also address the post-feminist claim that the need for feminism has passed. The evidence of female participation that serves as proof that second wave

³⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 415.

³¹ Melissa Deem, Disrupting the Nuptials in the Town Hall Debate: Feminism and the Politics of Cultural Memory in the USA, *Cultural Studies*, 17, (2003): 615–647.

³² Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus Critical Reflections on the Postsocialist Condition*, (Routledge, 1996).

feminism has served its purpose becomes less convincing when oppression is considered from diverse perspectives that include, but do not end with, gender.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the power of any collective memory resides in the collective power of the group to promulgate particular meanings among its membership. As the needs of a collectivity change, memories redefine those meanings.³³ When a collectivity remembers, its members do not necessarily remember an event chronologically or apply specific dates to specific events.³⁴ Rather, the history of an event is parsed out to meet the ideological needs of the group *in the present*. Therefore, “truth” about a movement is much less important to a collective memory than is the method by which a memory of the movement is constructed and how that memory will affect the future.

In this project, the power of a group to create alternative memories is paramount to understanding the implications memories can have on social movements. While collective memory helps a group develop a meaning for a historical event, it is also inherently incomplete in its recollection. Whether it is forgetting the crucial purposes of a movement, remembering alternative actions, or perhaps deliberately manipulating history in order to make something more meaningful in the here and now, collective memory has the ability, purposely or not, to alter the public’s perception of a social movement.

³³ Geoffrey Hartman, *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994).

³⁴ Marita Struken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

The authors in this project mobilize a conservative “public” through rhetorical devices that transform and shape the identities of individual social actors.³⁵ The rhetoric that flows between and among Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Dr. Laura overcomes the political schisms that separate a conservative community of classical liberals (equity feminists/authentic feminists) from moral traditionalists (True Women). Authors with deep political divides like Dr. Laura and Tammy Bruce use rhetoric to court each other through discourse. This is indicative of Gramscian social movement where oppositional communities come together, negotiate political commitments, and unite against a common enemy through hegemonic discourse.³⁶

These authors uphold the “truth” of feminism and thus the truth about oppression by establishing themselves as the moral protectors of virtue, for both women and the nation. But their memories are damaging. Foust cautions: “Alluring stories and ideas may earn great profits for information author-ities on the left and the right; but they do so as public discourse is reduced to speculation, scandal, and sensationalism.”³⁷ Hoff Sommers, Bruce, and Dr. Laura serve as moral authorities over feminism, and their memories scandalize modern feminism for profit. Feminist critics need to pay careful attention to the hegemonic power of a classically liberal “feminist” community that overwhelms and leaves absent alternative feminist memories; and may even constitute

³⁵ Michael C. McGee, *Rhetoric in Postmodern America: Conversations with Michael Calvin McGee*, C. Corbin, ed., (New York: Guilford, 1998); Michael Calvin McGee, “In search of ‘the people’: A Rhetorical Alternative.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 61, (1975): 235–249.

³⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, (International Publishers, New York, 2005).

³⁷ Foust, “Aesthetics as Weapons.” 135.

future generations as anti or post-feminist. We must address what is at stake in defining a “true” feminism through classically liberal principles.

If classically liberal feminism is to join in a feminist struggle, it must recognize and address the implicit and unequal distributions of power that remain firmly in place in classically liberal societies. Social change must happen, and not only in the form of concessions by the dominant bloc as individuals recreate themselves with more autonomy. Currently, the dominant bloc allows female empowerment, but only in so far that it does not interrupt the status quo. Furthermore, positions like those of Hoff Sommers, Bruce and Dr. Laura exalt the classically liberal virtues of the status quo, suggesting women should be grateful for their current positions, not weary of them.

Finally, classically liberal feminists must account for how their rhetoric renders feminist dissent unappreciative of the dominant bloc’s willingness to include women. The classically liberal feminist portrayal of the radical/liberal feminist as enemy might explain the “hatred,” or at least the disavowal of feminism in the modern era. These narratives reveal how a movement is reprimanded through renunciation when it resists (whether that resistance resembles feminism or other subversive movements) in ways that do not translate into classically liberal virtues. In taking up radical democracy, activists can recover feminism in a post-feminist era without reverting to battles over the definitions of “true feminism.” We can remember differently, and in so doing, pass along a feminism that is more encompassing and more capable of addressing oppression. Feminism is not irrelevant in the modern era. There are cultural practices that continue to subjugate women. Oppression is our common trait. Radical democracy can provide

feminists with better ways for interacting with each other and engaging in activism that is “relevant” for those that experience oppression from multiple fronts.

Bibliography

- American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Biography, Christina Hoff Sommers, retrieved July 14, 2009 from <http://www.aei.org/scholar/56>.
- Alcoff, Linda, M. Who's afraid of identity politics? In *Reclaiming identity: Realist theory and the predicament of postmodernism*, 312–344. P. Moya and M. Hames-Garcia. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2000.
- Behdad, Ali. 2005. *A forgetful nation: On immigration and cultural identity in the United States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Benhabib, Seyla. 1987. The generalized and concrete other: The Kohlberg—Gillian controversy and feminist theory. In *Feminism as critique* Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, eds., 77–95., Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Biesecker, Barbara. 2002. Remembering World War II: The rhetoric and politics of national commemoration at the turn of the 21st century. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88: 393–409.
- Blair, Carol. 2006. Communication as collective memory. In *Communication as ... Perspectives on Theory*. G. Shepherd, Gregg, St. John, J. and Striphas, T. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 51–60.
- Bowers, John, W. and Ochs, Donovan, J. 1992. *The rhetoric of agitation and control*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Brown, Stephen, H. 1993. Reading public memory in Daniel Webster's *Plymouth Rock Oration*. *Western Journal of Communication*, 57: 464–477.
- Bruce, Tammy. 2003. *The new thought police: Inside the left's assault on free speech and*

- free minds*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- 2003. *The death of right and wrong: Exposing the left's assault on our culture and values*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- 2005. *The new American revolution: Using the power of the individual to save our country from extremists*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- 2007. Quoted in Lucinda Marshal, "Fox News' Faux Feminist Attacks Women on the Left Over Muhammad Teddy Bear." December 4, 2007. Retrieved July 15, 2009 from http://www.alternet.org/blogs/peek/69625/fox_news'_faux_feminist_attacks_women_on_the_left_over_muhammad_teddy_bear/.
- "The 2008 Weblog Awards." Retrieved February 1, 2009, from http://tammybruce.com/2009/01/the_2008_weblog.php.
- "Biography." Retrieved February 1, 2009 from <http://tammybruce.com/biography.php>.
- Burke, Kenneth. 1969. *A grammar of motives*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- 1969. *A rhetoric of motives*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- 1973. *The philosophy of literary form*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Butler, Judith. 2006. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge Classics.
- Campbell, Karlyn K. 1989. *Man cannot speak for her, volume I: A critical study of early feminist rhetoric*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Inc.
- 1989. *Man cannot speak for her, volume II*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

- 1998. Inventing women: From Amaterasu to Virginia Woolf. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 21:111- 121.
- Charland, Maurice. 1987. Constitutive rhetoric: The case of the *People Quebecois*. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73: 133-150.
- Seymour Chatman, Seymour. 1990. *Coming to terms: The rhetoric of narrative in fiction and film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Cheney, George. 1983. The rhetoric of identification and the study of organizational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 69: 143–158.
- Cloud, Dana L. 1996. Hegemony or concordance? The rhetoric of tokenism in “Oprah” Winfrey’s rags-to-riches biography. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 13: 115–137.
- Cox, Robert. 1987. Argument and usable traditions. In *argumentation: Across the lines of discipline*, edited by Frans H. van Eemeren, et. al., eds .Dordrecht, Holland: Foris, 93-99.
- 1987. *Cultural memory and public moral argument*. [The Van Zelst Lecture in Communication] Evanston: Northwestern University School of Speech.
- Cox, Robert and Foust, Christina, R. 2008. Social movement rhetoric. In *The sage handbook of rhetorical studies*, edited by A.L. Lunsford, K. H. Wilson, and R.E. Eberly, 605–627. Sage Publications.
- Deem, Melissa. 2003. Disrupting the nuptials at the town hall debate: Feminism and the politics of cultural memory in the USA. *Cultural Studies*, 17, 615–647.
- DeLuca, Kevin. 1999. *Image politics: The new rhetoric of environmental activism*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Dickinson, Greg, Ott, Brian, L. and Aoki, Eric. 2006. Spaces of remembering and forgetting: The reverent eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3: 27–47.
- Dow, Bonnie, J. 1990. Hegemony, feminist criticism and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 7: 261-275.
- 1995. Feminism, difference(s), and rhetorical studies. *Communication Studies*, 46: 106–117.
- 2001. *Ally McBeal*, lifestyle feminism, and the politics of personal happiness,” *Communication Review*, 5: 259-264.
- 2004. Fixing feminism: Women’s liberation and the rhetoric of the television documentary. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 90: 53-80.
- 2005. Review essay: Reading the second wave. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*: 89–107.
- Dow, Bonnie, J. and Condit, M. 2005. State of the art in feminist scholarship, *Journal of Communication*, 55: 467.
- Echols, Alice. 1990. *Daring to be bad*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Eisenstein, Zillah, R. 1993. *The radical future of liberal feminism*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Evans, Sara. 2003. *Tidal wave: How women changed America at century’s end*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Faludi, Susan. 2006. *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women*, New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Foust, Christina, R. 2008. Aesthetics as weapons in the ‘war of ideas:’ Exploring the

- digital and typographic in American conservative web sites. *Southern Communication Journal*, 7:122–142.
- Fraser, Nancy. 1996. *Justice interruptus critical reflections on the postsocialist condition*. Routledge.
- Friedan, Betty. 2006. *Life so far*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Gamble, Sarah. 2002. *The Routledge companion to feminism and post feminism*, 2nd ed. Routledge.
- Gauthier, David. 1977 “The social contract as ideology.” In *Contemporary political philosophy*, 2nd ed. 55–72. R. E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 2005. *Selections from the prison notebooks*, New York, NY: International Publishers.
- Griffin, Charles, J. 2003. Movement as memory: Significant form in *Eyes on the Prize*. *Communication Studies*, 54: 196–210.
- Griffin, Leland, M. 1952. The rhetoric of historical movements. In *Readings on the rhetoric of social protest*, edited by C. E. Morris and S.H. Brown, 5-10. Strata Publishing, State College: PA, 2001.
- Hall, Stuart. 2003. Cultural identity and diaspora. In *Theorizing Diaspora*, 233–246. J. Evans Braziel and A. Mannur eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hartman, Geoffrey. 1994. *Holocaust remembrance: The shapes of memory*, ed. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Hartman, Susan, M. 1998. *The other feminists*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hoff Sommers, Christina. 1994. *Who stole feminism: How women have betrayed women*.

- New York, NY: Touchstone Books.
- November 4, 1994. Interview by Ben Wattenberg. “Has Feminism Gone too Far?” Retrieved April 10, 2008 from <http://www.menweb.org/paglsomm.htm>.
- 2001. Books: The war against boys. *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*. Retrieved July 3, 2009 from <http://www.aei.org/book/515>.
- August 1, 2008. Feminism and Freedom. *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*, Retrieved July 3, 2009 from <http://www.aei.org/issue/28410>.
- January 7, 2009. Guest blog post: Christina Hoff Sommers on ‘What’s Wrong and What’s Right with Contemporary Feminism?’” *Feminist Law Professors*. Retrieved March 5, 2009 from <http://feministlawprofs.law.sc.edu/?p=4553>.
- interview by Scott London, “The Future of Feminsim: An Interview With Christina Hoff Sommers,” retrieved July 10, 2009, from <http://www.scottlondon.com/interviews/sommers.html>.
- hooks, bell. 1990. Homeplace: A site of resistance. *Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics*. Boston, MA: South End.
- 2006. *Outlaw culture: Resisting representations*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Irwin-Zarecka, Iwona. 1994. *Frames of remembrance: The dynamics of collective memory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Jaggar, Alison, 1998. Political philosophies of women’s liberation. In *Feminism and*

- philosophy*, edited by M. Vetterling Braggin, F. Elliston and J. English, 5–21.
Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, 1998: 6–7.
- Jaggar, Allison, M. and Marion Young, Iris, M. 1998. *A companion to feminist philosophy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1996. *Practical philosophy*, ed. and translated by Mary J. Gregor. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Kammen, Michael, M. 1991. *Mystic chords of memory: The transformation of tradition in American culture*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- Kensinger, Loretta. 1997. (In)Quest of liberal feminism. *Hypatia*, 12: 178–197.
- Lafferty Elaine and Gleick, Elizabeth. 1996. “Fighting Words.” *Time Magazine*.
January, 1996. Retrieved November 9, 2008 from
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,983921,00.html?promoid=googlep>.
- Levine, Elena. 2008. Remaking *Charlie’s Angels*: The construction of post-feminist hegemony. *Feminist Media Studies*, 8: 375–389.
- Lucas, Stephen, E. 1980. Coming to Terms with Movement Studies.” *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, 146–157. C. E. Morris and S. H. Brown eds., State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001.
- Mansbridge, Jane and Moller, Susan, O. 2005. Feminism. In *A companion to contemporary political philosophy*. R.e. Goodin and P. Pettit, eds., 269–290.
Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Maddux, Kristy. Kristy Maddox, “Winning the Right to Vote in 2004,” *Feminist Media Studies*, 9, (2009): 73–94.

- 2008. The *da Vinci Code* and the regressive gender politics of celebrating women. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25: 225–248.
- 2009. Winning the right to vote in 2004. *Feminist Media Studies*, 9: 73–94.
- McRobbie, Angela. 2004. “Post-feminism and popular culture,” *Feminist Media Studies*, 4: 255–264.
- McGee, Michael, C. 1975. In search of ‘the people’: A rhetorical alternative. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 61: 235-249.
- 1980. ‘Social movement’: Phenomenon or meaning? In *Readings on the rhetoric of social protest*, edited by C. E. Morris and S.H. Brown, 125–136. Strata Publishing, State College: PA, 2001.
- 1990. Text, context, and the fragmentation of contemporary culture. *Western Journal of Communication*, 54: 274–289.
- 1998. *Rhetoric in postmodern America: Conversations with Michael Calvin McGee*, C. Corbin, ed. New York, NY: Guilford.
- McLaughlin, Lisa and Carter, Cynthia. 2004. Complicating gendered spaces. *Feminist Media Studies*, 4: 235-238.
- Meyer, Michaela D.E. 2007. Women speak(ing): Forty years of feminist contributions to Rhetoric and an agenda for feminist rhetorical studies. *Communication Quarterly*, 55: 1–17.
- Morris, Richard. 1997. *Sinners, lovers, and heroes: An essay on memorializing in three American Cultures*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- McKerrow, Raymie, E. 1989. Critical rhetoric: Theory and praxis. *Communication Monographs*, 56: 91-111.

- Medved, Caryn. 2004. Investigating family Labor in communication studies: Threading across historical and contemporary discourses. *Journal of Family Communication, 7*: 225-243.
- Mill, John Stewart. 1989. *On liberty and other writings*, edited by Stefan Collini. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 135. Quoted in J. Wolff, *An introduction to political philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2006: 104.
- Murphy, John, M. 1992. Domesticating dissent: The Kennedys and the freedom rides. In *Readings on the rhetoric of social protest*, edited by C. E. Morris and S. H. Brown, 47. Strata Publishing, State College: PA, 2006.
- National Organization for Women. 1995. "Problematic statements and angry responses statements made by or attributed to Tammy Bruce." Retrieved November 14, 2008 from <http://www.now.org/press/12-95/tb-3.html>.
- "About NOW," retrieved July 17, 2009 from <http://www.now.org/about.html>.
- Nichols, Clarina, H. 1851. "The Responsibilities of Woman." Quoted in KarylN Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her Volume, II*, (Greenwood Press, New York, 1989): 125–126.
- O'Kelly, Charlotte, G. 1985. *Women and men in society*, 2nd ed. Florence, KY: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Pateman, Carole, 1980. The fraternal social contract. In *Contemporary political philosophy*, 2nd ed. R. E. Goodin and P. Petit, eds., 73–87. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2006.
- Phillips, Anne. 1994. Dealing with difference: A politics of ideas or a politics of

- presence? In *Contemporary political philosophy*, 2nd ed. 171–181. R. E. Goodin and P. Pettit, eds., Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Phillips, Kendall, R. ed. 2004. *Framing public memory*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Public Broadcasting System. People & events: The 1968 protest. *American Experience*. Retrieved May 27, 2009 from http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/missamerica/peopleevents/e_feminists.html.
- Quinton, Anthony. 2005. “Conservatism” In *A companion to contemporary political philosophy*. R.E. Goodin and P. Pettit, eds., 244–268. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Rowland, Robert C. and Jones, John. 2001. Entelechial and reformatory symbolic trajectories in contemporary conservatism. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 4:55–84.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1973. *The social contract and discourses*, edited by G.D.H Cole, J.H. Brumfit, and John C. Hall. London, UK: Everyman: 196. Quoted in Wolff, J. *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006: 87.
- *Emile, or on Education*, tr. A Bloom. Basic Books, New York, 1979.
- Quoted in C. Pateman. 1980. “The fraternal social contract.” In *Contemporary Political philosophy*, 2nd ed. R. E. Goodin and P. Pettit eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006: 76.
- Ryan, Alan. 2005. “Liberalism,” In *A companion to contemporary political philosophy*. R. E. Goodin and P. Pettit, eds. 291–311. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Schlessinger, Laura. 1994. *Ten stupid things women do to mess up their lives*. New York,

NY: Harper Collins.

- 1999. "Why Celebrate Homosexuality?" *Jewish World Review*, July 27, 1999, retrieved July 13, 2009 from <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/dr/laura072799.asp>.
- 2001. *Ten stupid things parents do to mess up their kids*. New York, NY: Harper Paperbacks.
- 2003. *The proper care and feeding of marriage*. New York, NY: Harpers Collins.
- 2003. *Ten stupid things couples do to mess up their relationships*. New York, NY: Harper Paperbacks.
- 2004. "How Low Can Women Go? Dr. Laura Schlessinger nails Barbara Walters for Sleazy TV Program." *WorldNetDaily.com*. May 7, 2004. Retrieved February 10, 2009 from http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=38381.
- 2004. *The proper care and feeding of husbands*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- 2006. Interview by Phil Brennan, "Exclusive Interview: Dr. Laura: Feminist Movement 'Knifed' Parenting" January 25, 2006. *NewsMax.com*. Retrieved July 13, 2009 from <http://archive.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2006/1/24/144521.shtml>.
- 2007. *The proper care and feeding of marriage*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- 2009. Interview by Michelle Kung, "The Mommy Wars: Dr. Laura on Stay

- at Home Moms,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 8, 2009. Retrieved June 15, 2009 from <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123913529589098057.html>.
- “Baby Boomer Women,” *Dr. Laura’s Blog*, Retrieved February 10, 2009 from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/category/feminism/>.
- “Am I Anti-Female?” *The Dr. Laura Blog*. Retrieved February 19, 2009 from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/>.
- “Feminists Should Go Where They are Needed,” *Dr. Laura’s Blog*, retrieved February 23, 2009 from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/category/feminism/>.
- “About Dr. Laura,” retrieved July 6, 2009 from <http://www.drlaura.com/about/>.
- “Why I am Praising of Moms” *Dr. Laura’s Blog*. Retrieved June 12, 2009 from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/category/in-praise-of-mom/>.
- “Is ‘Personal Responsibility’ a Four-Letter Word?” *Dr. Laura’s Blog*, retrieved July 9, 2009, from <http://www.drlaurablog.com/category/infidelity/>.
- *In Praise of Stay at Home Moms* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2009).
- Schneider, Gregory, L. 2001. *Conservatism in America since 1930: A reader*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Shome, Raka. 2001. White femininity and the discourse of the nation: Re/membering Princess Diana. *Feminist Media Studies*, 1: 323–342.
- Simon, Roger, L. *A touch of the past: Remembrance, learning and ethics*. New York, NY: Palgrave McMillan, 2005.
- Simons, Herbert, W. 1970. Requirements, problems, and strategies: A theory of persuasion for social movements. In *Readings on the rhetoric of social protest*,

- edited by C.E. Morris and S. H. Brown, 26–34. State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2001.
- Shogun, Coleen J. 2006. Coolidge and Reagan: The rhetorical influence of Silent Cal on The Great Communicator. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 9: 220.
- Solomon, Martha. 1979. The ‘Positive Woman’s’ journey: A mythical analysis of the rhetoric of STOP ERA. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 65: 262–74.
- Stanton, Elizabeth, C. 1848. Speech at the Seneca Falls Convention. Quoted in K.K. Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her, Volume II*, New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1989: 43.
- Seneca Falls Address, C. quoted in Ellen Carol Dubois, *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton Susan B. Anthony Reader*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992.
- Stewart, Charles, J., Smith, Craig, A. and Denton, Robert, E., Jr. 1989. *Persuasion and social movements*, 2 ed. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Stienem, Gloria. 1995. *Outrageous acts and everyday rebellions*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Struken Marita. 1997. *Tangled memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and the politics of remembering*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- Talk Radio KABC. “Tammy Bruce.” Retrieved February 3, 2009 from <http://www.kabc.com/Article.asp?id=335945>.
- Wendal, Susan. 1987. A (qualified) defense of liberal feminism. *Hypatia*, 2: 65–94.
- Wood, John C. 1983. *Adam Smith: Critical assessments, volume. III*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Wood, Julia, 1994. *Who cares: women, care, and culture*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois

University Press.

Wood, Julia T. 1996. Dominant and muted discourses in popular representations of feminism. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 82: 171–205.

——— 2003. *Gendered Lives: Communication Gender and Culture*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Wolff, Jonathan. 2006. *Introduction to political philosophy*. Oxford, UK.: Oxford University Press.

Wright, Jonathon B. 2007. “Introduction.” In *The wealth of nations*, xi–xviii. Adam Smith. Hampshire, UK: Harriman House.

Young, Iris, M. 1989. Polity and group difference: A critique of the ideal universal citizenship. In *Contemporary Political Philosophy*. R. E. Goodin and P. Pettit, eds., 248–263. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Zarefsky, David. 1980. A skeptical view of movement studies. In *Readings on the rhetoric of social protest*, edited by C. E. Morris and S. H. Brown 137–146. State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2006.

Zelizer, Barbie. 1995. Reading the past against the grain: The shape of memory studies. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12: 214-239.