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# Examining the Theoretical Consequences of a Post-feminist Media Culture

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**Examining the Theoretical Consequences of a Post-feminist Media Culture**

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Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Examining the Theoretical Consequences of a Post-Feminist Media Culture

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Since the early 1990s, feminist scholars have declared that a post-feminist media culture has arisen throughout the Westernized world to attack the ideas and values promoted by feminists and the second-wave feminist movement that became established in the late 1960s and 70s.  Consequently, this study is designed to gauge the influence that these media have in shaping the attitudes of young college women (in the 18-25 year old demographic) toward feminism and key women's rights issues.  In order to better understand whether post-feminist media are able to detract support from the feminist movement, this study attempts to quantify the relationship between viewing post-feminist media and agreeing with assumptions made by post-feminism.  The findings of this study suggest that the more frequently college-age women view post-feminist media, the more likely these women are to agree with post-feminist assumptions about women's rights issues.

Examining the Theoretical Consequences of a Post-feminist Media Culture

Chapter 1:  Introduction

In a 2012 ABC Nightline interview, Republican South Carolina governor Nikki Haley attacked the notion that the conservative mainstream in America has been waging a war on women's rights (McFadden, 2012).  She argued that women's rights activists are misguided in their beliefs that her party's stance on contraceptives is anti-women.  In order to do this, Haley used anti-feminist rhetoric to defend her party's opposition to the government mandate that insurance companies should cover birth control costs.  Many women's rights advocates had viewed the mandate as a further step in the effort for gender equality, but Haley repeatedly attacked the plan, declaring that "women don't care about contraception" (Wakeman, 2012, para. 1).  Then she made a similar statement in an interview with Joy Behar on the popular talk show *The View*.  Behar responded that women should care about contraception, arguing that when politicians such as former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum threaten to take away contraceptives, which help give women control over their reproductive rights, it represents an attack on the very concept of gender equality (Wakeman, 2012).  Haley did not stop here, however, as she also stated in an ABC Nightline interview that feminists made it seem like women "only [cared] about contraception," but that in reality women were "smarter and broader" than to let such women's rights issues "define [our] views" (McFadden, 2012, para. 14).  Furthermore, when asked if she thought of herself as a feminist, Haley said that it was a "hard word" and that she did not like what it represented (McFadden, 2012, para. 15).

The stance taken by Haley on the issue of contraception and women's reproductive rights exemplifies post-feminist rhetoric, which invokes a feminist issue only to reject it and presume it is outdated, too extreme, or no longer necessary.  Furthermore, post-feminists presume that

because women have already been empowered, any further attempt to better the lives of women is extreme and an example of ruthless, man-hating women grasping at straws to quench their lusts for superiority. The rhetoric used by Haley to demonize women's rights activism incorporates each of the themes of post-feminism in its persuasive technique. For example, she posits herself as a liberated woman who is too concerned with "jobs and the economy" to care about trivial matters such as contraception, and uses her celebrity status to influence other liberated women to do the same (Wakeman, 2012, para. 4). This tactic implies that the need for any pro-female activism is in the past-tense, and it critiques feminists for being too extreme, while simultaneously guising its true intentions within a shield of convoluted rhetoric that makes post-feminist women seem independent and, therefore, pro-women. By making this ideology seem to be the norm for an independent proud female, post-feminism inherently ostracizes any female activism that falls outside of its constructed boundaries. For example, Haley invokes her position as an independent woman and role model only to state that powerful women like her are too smart to care about contraception. As a result, she demonizes any woman who recognizes that the availability of contraception plays an important role in establishing women's sexual equality to males by giving them control over their own bodies. Other popular celebrities, such as Lady Gaga, have used post-feminist rhetoric to portray women's rights issues and the feminist movement in a similar vein. As a singer whose lyrics seem to challenge the sexual double standard women face, Gaga seems progressive and is very influential, but her views on feminism are quite contrary to what one might expect. Gaga's statement that she is "not a feminist" because she "love[s] men" emphasizes the assumptions of post-feminism because it portrays the concerns of women's rights advocates as those of a straw man, weakened by a lack of substance (Keller, 2010, title). Because such a popular singer is able to influence young women with

music, lyrics, and themes that encourage women to be sexually engaging with men, yet discourage them from protecting their own rights in the process, Gaga's message makes women seem like they are independent, yet ultimately reduces women to men's playthings. The rhetoric used by Governor Haley and Lady Gaga personify a very influential post-feminist media culture, in which the media and celebrities spread their anti-feminist message through popular culture.

Post-feminist media theory was an important development in the field of mass communications study that arose in the 1980s. The concept of post-feminism presumes that gender equality, women's rights, and female independence have been achieved, rendering the traditional feminist movement no longer necessary (McRobbie, 2004). This subject became more widespread throughout the 1990s, resulting in the development of post-feminist media studies (Tasker & Negra, 2005). Pioneer theorists, such as Susan Faludi (1992), perceived post-feminism and its fundamental assumptions to present a backlash against feminist goals and values, especially those embodied by the second-wave feminist movement (Levine, 2008). Faludi's *Backlash* (1992) played a pivotal role in illustrating how examples from different media, namely magazines, advertisements targeted at young women, and film and television portrayals, paved the way for a post-feminist backlash. They depicted feminist-minded career women as overly emancipated to the point at which the women's liberation movement alienated them from fulfilling romantic and maternal instincts, traits which post-feminism presumes to be an integral component of the feminine identity, yet antithetical to the 'masculinized' feminist agenda. Non-conformers to the feminine ideals of beauty, maternity and unassertive complacence were demonized or omitted entirely in these portrayals. In return the media offered women a "troublesome" brand of "popular" or "commodity feminism" (McRobbie, 2008, p. 532), an extension of post-feminism, in which women's empowerment and individual freedom of choice

are taken for granted and women are encouraged to exercise newfound freedoms through making consumer choices to enhance their feminine sexuality, which is represented as their primary source of power and identity (Gill, 2007).

Gill takes this notion a step further, discussing how post-feminist media operate under a seemingly feminist guise, promoting in the name of feminism certain kinds of freedom—such as the expression of sexuality—in place of real feminist politics (2011). Gill theorizes that, in the end, this rhetoric adds to women's oppression because it depoliticizes women's rights and takes real safeguards against sexism out of the equation, creating a culture in which anti-feminist ideals are repackaged as post-feminist freedoms, sexism is the unspeakable, and women are objectified as sex subjects (Gill, 2007; Gill, 2011). McRobbie agrees with this analysis, arguing that "elements of contemporary culture are perniciously effective in regard to this undoing of feminism," which advertises itself as engaged "in a well-informed and even well-intended response to feminism" (2004, p. 255).

Theorists assert that the effectiveness of the post-feminist media in undermining feminist goals and values lies in the covert nature of its fundamental message (Barger, 2011), which constitutes a "false feminism" (Kim, 2001, p. 321) through claiming that the war over women's liberation has been won, leading to the assumption that because gender inequality no longer exists, women no longer need to maintain vigilance (McRobbie, 2004). Such depictions, according to McRobbie, inhibit feminism from being considered in any other light than as a movement that has already "passed away," retired, or served its purpose (2004, p. 255). The current pervasiveness of post-feminist content in advertising, film and television has led Gill (2007) to declare that post-feminism can no longer be thought of as simply a backlash against feminism, as characterized previously by Faludi; rather, it should be conceived as a sensibility,

one that has entrenched itself within wider cultural boundaries.  The following exploration into

post-feminist media influence will reveal how the media demonize feminism to pave the way for

post-feminist sensibility.  Furthermore, the upcoming literature review, which is heavily based

upon scholars' analysis regarding the presence of post-feminist ideology in popular media, will

establish the theoretical groundwork to define four consequences of a post-feminist media

culture.  These consequences include the depiction of sexuality as a woman's primary source of

power, the media-created notion of a women's sexual liberation and the paradox this poses for

women, the popularization of the "chick flick" ideology that heterosexual love is the solution to

all that ails women, and the depoliticization of women's reproductive rights.  A close analysis of

these consequences will create a framework with which to suggest how strongly post-feminist

culture has spread among women and whether or not it has detracted support from the feminist

movement and key women's rights issues.

In order to determine the pervasiveness of post-feminism's influence, a survey study has

been conducted to assess whether women who view thematically post-feminist media content

report post-feminist assumptions that match the consequences of post-feminist culture as

identified in the literature review section.  The hypothesis of this study is as follows:  A positive

correlation is predicted between viewing thematically post-feminist media content and reporting

post-feminist assumptions that the need for feminism is past-tense, that gender equality has been

achieved in society, that women have been sexually liberated, that physical attractiveness is a

primary source of female power, and that women's reproductive rights are treated fairly—

suggesting that women have full control over these rights—throughout popular culture.  This

study will strive to provide the grounds for future research to determine the impact that the post-

feminist cultural mindset—as promoted through film and other media—has had on shaping

women's attitudes toward feminism and influencing their support for key issues of women's rights.

<div style="text-align:center">Theoretical Basis of This Study</div>

The theoretical basis for the following exploration and study into the effects of post-feminist media on young female audiences is the process of cultivation analysis developed by George Gerbner and Lary Gross. According to Gerbner (1998), cultivation theory is built upon empirical data which suggest that "recurrent patterns of stories, images, and messages" present in television replaces the actual lived reality of an audience member with a more dominant, mainstream social reality that is brought on by prolonged exposure to television viewing (p. 191). Gerbner asserts that the resultant formation of a television reality is not brought on by exposure to specific genres, but is instead the process of collective television viewing as a whole, which ultimately homogenizes the mass, people from different social backgrounds and cultural experiences, toward a more unified perception of one's identity, reality, and the world itself. This theory is well situated within the vein of post-feminism effects research because Gerbner argues that television media do not attempt to simply reflect the images, opinions, and beliefs of the mass audience in order to attract viewers. Researchers influenced by the uses and gratifications approach to understanding media effects, on the other hand, suggest that the media study society and reflect the opinions, beliefs, and desires of the public to accommodate consumer needs. Gerbner opposes this viewpoint, stating that "[i]nstitutional needs and objectives influence the creation and distribution of mass produced messages," which "exploit and sustain the needs, values, and ideologies of mass publics" (p. 180). According to Gerbner's interpretation, institutions, marketers, and the media seek to homogenize the masses to fulfill their own agendas. If some media creators are seeking to homogenize women to embrace

agendas that contradict principles of feminist ideology, as predicted by several feminist scholars, this strategy could be the result of their desire to reaffirm the need for women to accept more traditional values. This idea relates heavily to early opinions expressed in Faludi's (1992) scholarship on post-feminism, in which she explains how notions such as the biological clock and man shortage were introduced into popular television, film, and women's magazines to motivate women to be less career-oriented and purchase consumer products to increase their physical attractiveness.

More specifically, Gerbner (1998) elaborates that cultivation takes place through two primary processes known as mainstreaming and resonance. He defines mainstreaming as the process through which people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds develop "shared meanings and assumptions" through repeated exposure to the same images, themes, and situations played out in the reality constructed by television (p. 183). Gerbner (1998) claims that the process of resonance also plays a key role in homogenizing the mass audience, as the portrayals of characters in situations on television begin to parallel the experiences of audience members' actual lives. The audience begins to identify with these situations, relate to them in certain ways, and internalize them. These processes are often referenced in scholarship concerning the effects of post-feminist media content, as several scholars argue that post-feminism has stripped support from feminist goals by persuading its female audience to not only internalize its constructed reality that women's equality has been achieved and activism is no longer necessary, but also by encouraging women to identify with the pressures and situations facing female protagonists in the television world. For these reasons, cultivation analysis is the most suitable communication theory on which to base the present study. Although the following discussion addresses only a specific type of media, as opposed to the wide range available to

consumers, applying cultivation analysis to this study will help imply whether frequently

consuming a specific type of media can influence one's attitudes.  The results cannot establish

whether maintaining an eclectic media diet—which should result in one learning a variety of

different perspectives—is the antidote to the dissemination of hegemony, but the implications of

this research can suggest the extent to which being subjected to the same ideology results in the

self-expression of its principal assumptions.

Chapter 2:  Literature Review

Scholars argue that post-feminism calls for a dismissal of the movement for gender equality and women's rights issues, messages which are surreptitiously communicated to the public through film and other media (Holmlund, 2005). They predict that these sentiments are then internalized by women who either distance themselves from the goals of feminism because they do not want to be associated with a movement depicted as extreme, or they simply take feminist goals for granted (Holmlund, 2005).  As stated previously, this literature review will use scholarly literature written about post-feminist media culture and its influence on women's attitudes to identify four consequences of post-feminist media content, which will prove crucial to the following survey study's objective to suggest whether exposure to post-feminist media content influences women's attitudes toward feminist issues.

Demonizing Feminism: A Prelude into Post-feminism

Theorists argue the backlash against second-wave feminism, which paved the way for post-feminism to be solidified, manifested itself through the media and film industry's demonization and marginalization of feminist values.  Because women were portrayed as too emancipated for their own good, feminism was assumed to be no longer necessary; career-oriented women who still seemed to embody feminist characteristics were portrayed in an extremely negative light (Faludi, 1992).  According to Faludi, a slew of movies that came out in the late 1980s and early 1990s were characterized by this theme, but perhaps none quite so much as 1987's *Fatal Attraction*, which—during its theatrical release—drew shouts along the lines of "punch the bitch's face in" from moviegoers across America in reference to the story's antagonist, Alex Forrest, a single career woman who seduces and nearly destroys a happily married man's life (Faludi, 1992, p. 112).  The movie, originally scripted as a morality play

questioning the man's decision to cheat on his wife (Faludi, 1992), wound up positioning Alex as

an over-emancipated, mentally-ill career woman who has been so damaged by a reluctance to

return to home and hearth that she is at once both a manifestation and victim of a brand of

feminism that is portrayed as aggressive, violent and harmful (Joshel, 1992).

The polar opposite of Alex, who has an affair with Dan Gallagher, is Beth, Dan's wife.

Beth is dedicated to domestic work and represents the "good woman" component in the media's

creation and juxtaposition of "good" and "bad" women to distinguish the positive qualities of a

woman from the negative qualities (Wood, 2001, p. 285). She is depicted as a maternal

caregiver who is strong-willed in her support for her husband later in the film when a pregnant

Alex will not accept Dan's refusal of a relationship (Joshel, 1992). Meanwhile, Alex grows

increasingly insane and her repulsion by Dan's family life, which is shown when she

symbolically vomits at the sight of his family, further positions her as a representative of feminist

extremes. According to Joshel, this comparison arouses sympathy for Beth as a sweet, innocent

victim and contempt for Alex as evil and predatory. By associating Beth with virtue and Alex

with a wicked, family-hating brand of feminism, the film forces the notion that if audience

members sympathize with feminism, they attack virtue and morality (Joshel, 1992). Thus,

because feminism is manifested through the antagonistic Alex, the notion is posited that

feminism is unnecessary, destructive, and immoral. The climax of the movie sees a form of anti-

feminist justice served, with the virtuous heroine Beth shooting Alex in the chest (Joshel, 1992),

effectively freeing herself and other women from the potential dangers of a feminist crutch that

was seen as having long served its purpose.

Sexiness = Independence:  Liberating the Man Instead of the Woman

Wood (2001) theorizes that notions of a women's liberation are generally far more emancipating for men than for women.  After reinforcing the concept that women had achieved emancipation from the confines of patriarchy and that traditional feminism was a militant relic of the past, media—especially commercial advertisers—began purporting that women could embrace newfound independence through making individual choices, any of which in post-feminism is considered a pro-woman decision (Barger, 2011).  This idea leads to the interpretation that the objectification of women by males is not a major problem because independent women choose to sexualize themselves for their own pleasure, not for the enjoyment of the male viewer (McRobbie, 2004).  Forms of "commodity feminism" spawned by post-feminist sensibility are targeted at women equating a sleek, toned physique as "essential for success" (Gill, 2007, p. 150).  The suggestion is that, if—in stark contradiction to traditional feminism—the feminine body is promoted as a woman's greatest resource of power, women cannot have a truly whole identity without conforming to ideal forms of beauty and social attractiveness.  This realization illustrates Gill's point that post-feminist sensibility "harness[es] the cultural energy of feminism and sell[s] it back to women, emptied of its political content" (2011, p. 63).

Moreover, Gill (2007) asserts that media depict the feminine body as a form of women's power "requiring constant monitoring, surveillance, discipline and remodeling in order to conform to ever-narrow judgments of female attractiveness" (p. 149).  At the same time, television shows such as *What Not To Wear* and *10 Years Younger* scrutinize women whose bodies are considered deficient to the social ideal, "chick-lit" movies such as *Bridget Jones's Diary* equate weight gain with mental deterioration, and magazines exploit women as sexual

subjects, freeing men from the guilt of sexism by deconstructing sexual objectification and

representing it "not as something done to women by men, but as the freely chosen wish of active,

confident, assertive female subjects" (Gill, 2007, p. 153).  Furthermore, although men's

magazines discuss sex as a form of carefree, youthful pleasure, magazines targeted at young girls

construct sexuality as requiring incessant attention, discipline and maintenance.  Such an

illustration shows that the media's propagation of sexual liberation as feminine power

emancipates men, although women are held to a double-standard.  Without the oppositional

reading made available by traditional feminist values, patriarchy cannot be seen as the culprit.

Levine (2008) argues that, over time, post-feminist texts and messages have been

reinforced through film and other media to the point where they have been culturally internalized

and a "contemporary post-feminist hegemony" has been formed (p. 376).  Gill seemingly agrees

with this assertion, rhetorically questioning how else "socially constructed ideals of beauty or

sexiness" could be "internalized and felt as our own—all the way down" and not perceived as

"external impositions" (2011, p. 66).  Levine theorizes that this question may be answered by

observing the repeated reinforcement of post-feminist sentiments—including socially

constructed notions of beauty—in television and film over the last few decades (2008).  Because

film and television collectively form the strongest media for evoking audience self-identification

on the part of the viewer, they should have the ability to influence viewers' perceptions to a

certain extent over time.  Levine, therefore, observed reincarnations of the popular '70s

television show *Charlie's Angels* to analyze how the successive literal and spiritual remakes over

time seemed to imitate a gradual shift in feminist thought that took place in society.  She posited

the original *Charlie's Angels* series against the more recent 2000 and 2003 film incarnations to

show the greatest degree of polarity between remakes, concluding that although the original

series is certainly not a great example of feminism, it is far more closely aligned with second-wave feminism than the remakes, which she considers clearly post-feminist (Levine, 2008). This difference is noteworthy because scholars widely perceive post-feminism to be a direct, antagonistic response that undermines the goals and values of second-wave feminism.

Levine (2008) suggests that, by acting as agents of reinforcement for the gradual shift that occurred in feminist thought over time, television and film have helped naturalize post-feminism into a "kind of common sense that is especially difficult to resist" (p. 376). One of the biggest differences she noticed between the original series and the remakes is that, although the original series objectified its characters and placed them in ridiculously sexualized outfits, it at least made clear to viewers that this only took place to fulfill the characters' jobs as undercover agents. Furthermore, Levine notes that the introduction to each episode at least makes mention of the unfair treatment endured by women in the workplace and does not depoliticize this integral women's rights issue. On the contrary, in the remakes, which claimed to be as faithful as possible to the original series, there is no mention whatsoever of women's workplace inequality (Levine, 2008). Furthermore, the angels parade around scantily clad for no apparent reason. This depiction evokes the post-feminist notions that feminine sexuality equals women's independence, and that women willingly seek to be sexualized and objectified by men because it suits their interests as liberated women (Gill, 2007).

Television shows that have been cited for the same types of depictions include *Sex and the City* and *Desperate Housewives*, but arguably none has been referenced more often than *Ally McBeal* (Kim, 2001). Kim describes how the show situates the title character as a Harvard Law School graduate, a categorically strong female position, in order to ultimately deflate her as eccentric, flighty, unprofessional and emotionally unstable. The character is extremely

sexualized, wears skimpy, attention-seeking outfits due to a lack of security, and spends part of her time in the courtroom engaging in a private sexual fantasy world smiling at men and unfocused on her important job. Another character on the show, Ling, says that she only does this work so she can wear sexy outfits. Such representations of women as willingly objectified sexual subjects void of intellectual substance are certainly demeaning and not realistic representations of career women (Kim, 2001), but as Turner suggests, with such representations of women frequenting the media, "the sexually liberated modern woman turns out to resemble— what do you know!—the pneumatic, take-me-now-big-boy fuck-puppet of male fantasy after all" (as cited in Gill, 2007, p. 152).

The Paradox of Sexual Liberation and Other Pressures on the Young Female Consumer

McRobbie asserts that pre-teens and young teenage women are becoming ideal subjects of feminine consumption within our consumer culture, a transition that creates "new modalities of gender performativity" that are now "routinely required of young girls—so that they can in effect count as girls" (2008, p. 546). These requirements for young girls to achieve the normative feminine identity propagated in our consumer culture pressure them to adhere to socially constructed standards of femininity at a younger age than ever before. Essentially, McRobbie explains that forms of advertising targeted at young girls endeavor to sexualize them within their gendered identity. This strategy coincides with the rise in the "girl power" movement, which is characterized by the notion of sex as a commodity and an emphasis on social beauty (McRobbie, 2008, 544). Magazines targeted at "young, pre-teen girls" such as *Bliss* and *Sugar* "imagine" the "very young female consumer into being" by bestowing upon her "objects of adult—female beautification," such as thong-style underwear, bikinis, beads, bracelets, body lotion and lipstick (McRobbie, 2008, p. 545). Furthermore, shirts with phrases

such as "Unbelievable knockers," "Fcuk me," "Porn Star," and "Fit Chick" on them are targeted

at the young female consumer, encouraging women to rebel by embracing their independent

sexualities (Gill, 2007). McRobbie responds to such advertising by mentioning that it is

indicative of how in post-feminist culture, "the young woman is leant upon to show that she is

'up for it' by distancing herself from the now outdated politics of the women's movement"

(2008, p. 544). Another consequence of post-feminist culture is that the shift in how young

women are encouraged to rebel and embrace their sexualization as an aspect of girl

empowerment—often referred to by scholars as the "riotgrrl" movement—is labeled as a type of

commodity feminism and associated by many with elements of third-wave feminism (McRobbie,

2008, p. 547). The fact that some people attach the label of feminism to an ideology that excuses

the objectification of women reiterates how women's equality is being taken for granted by those

who presume society to be past the need for true feminist action. As observed by Gill, "to be

critical of the shift is not to be somehow 'anti-sex,'" but labeling of this sort within post-feminist

media culture ensures that the position of the prude "is the only alternative discursively allowed"

(Gill, 2007, p. 152).

*Third-Wave Feminism's Role in the Post-feminist Debate*

It is important to note that although third-wave feminism and post-feminism are often

assumed to be interchangeable, Showden (2009) argues that this connection is erroneous, stating

that these movements are different in almost every way apart from their "shared 'girl power'

ideal" (p. 166). She elaborates that although "post-feminism has exerted more political and

cultural influence… third-wave feminism holds the most promise for building on and expanding

outward from previous feminist theory and political practice" (Showden, 2009, p. 167). In order

to make the point that post-feminism became established first, predominantly in the late 80s and

early 90s, and third-wave feminism evolved later and departed from post-feminism over time,

Showden first acknowledges how pioneer post-feminists incorrectly argued that the need for

feminist action was over because women had achieved power and sexism had been mitigated,

and then she claims that third-wave feminism arose from the mutually shared principle that, in

order to truly recognize female power, women needed to diverge somewhat from second-wave

feminism's central focus on the victimization of women.  The factor that separates third-wave

feminism from post-feminism, according to Showden, is how the movement also draws from

second-wave feminism because it does not assume that equal rights issues have been fully

accomplished.  On the contrary, the problem with post-feminism, she argues, is that the

movement completely depoliticizes women's rights issues to the extent that no alternative

discourse is allowed.  To support this idea, she references how, in the 1990s, post-feminists were

"opposed to most organized feminist work around rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment,

and the legal interventions that accompanied some of this activism" (Showden, 2009, p. 170).

She argues that instead of focusing on ways in which the feminist movement could continue to

grow, post-feminism has "[focused] on personal choices rather than political action" (Showden,

2009, p. 172), which ultimately amounts to "a slickly marketed girl-power identity" that has been

crafted by the media.  Despite her concession that third-wave feminism evolved out of the post-

feminist notion that women should embrace their power instead of focus primarily on their

victimization, Showden (2009) claims that, although the politics of third-wave feminism are still

emerging, "one can see the contours of a growing political group… that rejuvenates the evolving,

ongoing projects of the second wave rather than rejecting them" (p. 179).

     Although third-wave feminism differs from the second wave in its approach to gender

identity, as exemplified by new feminists' opposition to labeling their sexuality and reluctance to

reject feminine qualities, which are seen more as sources of independent female pride, the movement's goals "include first- and second-wave core beliefs," such as "legal, political, and social equality" (Showden, 2009, p. 184). In fact, third-wave feminism deals with movements outside of solely the women's spectrum, including "HIV/AIDS awareness, child sexual abuse, self-mutilation, globalization, eating disorders, and sexual health" (Showden, 2009, p. 184). The weakness of the third-wave feminist movement, Showden argues, "is that the cultural reworking and critiquing that even the best of the third wave provides suggests no clear way to determine where to launch political interventions, the bases on which they are to be launched, or the resignifications that are to be offered" (p. 184). Perhaps this study's exploration into the consequences of post-feminist media culture can inform third-wave feminists on the pervasiveness of post-feminism's influence and the extent to which it is able to detract support from feminism among young adult women. The results of this study could suggest the need for third-wave feminists to distance themselves from post-feminism through spreading awareness for how post-feminist media attempt to subvert the goals of feminist action by promoting false, consumer freedoms to make a profit instead of advocating genuine feminist politics.

*Depiction of Post-feminist Pressures and Their Consequences in Film*

Having considered the paradox of sexual liberation for teenage girls and young women in general, it is worthwhile to discuss Kathleen Karlyn's assessment of how the 2003 film *Thirteen* exposes some of the pressures teenage girls face in a post-feminist consumer society, which may enlighten viewers on the consequences of the media's unrestrained advocacy of sexual liberation messages (Karlyn, 2006). Karlyn discusses how Tracy, its thirteen year-old protagonist, is thrust into a world of sex, drugs, and self-mutilation through cutting, as a means to release herself from the pressures and expectations of teenage girls in a post-feminist, consumer culture. Karlyn

(2006) argues that, through the suffering of the film's protagonists, the movie registers the impact of wider social forces on the lives of its characters, exploring post-feminist themes such as "sexuality as an expression of empowered femininity, and the pleasures of consumerism as a means of self-expression and identify formation" (p. 454). She discusses how the film was written by co-star Nikki Reed about her own experiences dealing with the sexual pressures placed on girls to conform to the social ideal. Karlyn argues that the film's message comes out after Tracy, an honors student, becomes the friend of Evie, the most popular girl in school, who exposes Tracy to social ideals of attractiveness and the power of her own burgeoning sexuality, as shown in a scene in which Tracy pierces her lip and belly-button to conform to her new friend's standard, and another in which the girls show off their butts in tight-fitting, low-slung jeans (2006).

Meanwhile, Karlyn discusses how the film is drenched with images of "a commodity culture aimed at women," replete with "billboards advertising expensive clothing brands such as Armani," and posters promoting cosmetic brands with the tagline "Beauty is Truth" (2006, p. 456). In this film, the pressures placed on young girls to conform to the ideal, sexually liberated adult woman, and the potential consequences of this pressure, are shown through the transformation Tracy undergoes to satisfy Evie, who interprets sexuality as power and consumerism as the means to achieving it. Karlyn notes, however, that Evie is also the victim of "social forces" she is "powerless to resist or even understand" (2006, p. 459). Both girls have the understanding that sexual beauty is associated with all forms of empowerment for women, including money, material goods, youth, popularity, and social approval. Drug addiction is the outlet for escaping pressures in a world where, according to McRobbie's analysis of the film, "the fashioning of a credible female self brings with it incalculable injuries and loss, and the

requirement to become a 'real girl' gives rise to unfathomable rage" (as cited in Karlyn, 2006, p.

459). The film also implies that Tracy's sexual initiation, which involves performing fellatio, is

done solely because the boy expects her to, leading to Karlyn's summation that "*Thirteen* shows

how easily young teen girls can be drawn into traditional scripts about what a culture idealizes in

a woman: being sexually available for men regardless of her own desires" (2006, p. 463).

*The News Media's Failure to Expose These Consequences*

In a manner reminiscent of Karlyn's observations of how post-feminist culture

contributed to Tracy's subjugation in *Thirteen*, feminist scholar Andrea Press (2011) blames the

paradoxical nature of the media emphasis on sexual liberation for contributing to the suicide of

15-year old Phoebe Prince of Massachusetts. Stories in the news media blamed cyber-bullying

as the culprit, treating her suicide as evidence of "the increasingly harsh teen culture enabled by

social networking" (Press, 2011, p. 107). This coverage caused Press to criticize the news media

for failure to expose the primary source of the problem; she argues that Phoebe merely acted out

the new sort of "sexual freedom" emphasized by post-feminist culture, "for which she was

resoundingly disciplined and punished" (2011, p. 109). In supporting her claim, she discussed

how Phoebe, a recent immigrant to the U.S. from Ireland, embraced and utilized her sexual

attractiveness, usurping other girls' place as the girlfriend of notable high-school athletes, and

was taunted and threatened in retaliation. It was reported that on Facebook, Phoebe was called

variations of "slut," "whore," and "Irish whore," and one girl wrote "Irish bitch is a Cunt" next to

her name on the library sign-in sheet while others yelled demeaning things at her in public

(Press, 2011, p. 107). What fuels Press's argument is that, in a post-feminist era filled with

notions of sexual freedom, young women have a "cultural sanction, even imperative" to have sex

with their boyfriends (p. 108). Phoebe was thus the victim of a cultural paradox which, in one

instance, encourages women to embrace sexual freedoms, and in the next, punishes and demeans them using anti-feminist language and ideas about women's sexual behavior.  Press's criticism of the news media for failing to recognize this factor is reinforced by social networking expert Dana Boyd's comment that "people are blaming technology rather than trying to solve the underlying problems of the kids that are hurting" (as cited in Press, 2011, p. 107).  In conclusion, Press proposes that future attention must be paid to examining the effects of post-feminist culture in order to gain more knowledge of the paradoxical situation facing young women in today's society.

Rise of the Chick Flick: Heterosexual Romance and the Return to an Earlier Era

Scholars posit that an analysis of movie remakes reveals how post-feminist culture has been internalized by society and instituted as a culturally entrenched position (Levine, 2008). Vint (2007) describes how the 2005 remake of 1975's *The Stepford Wives* is an example of how, in today's post-feminist media culture, post-feminist films are marketed to young women under a seemingly progressive, feminist guise, but in actuality they distort the feminist message of their predecessors, instead implying that the gender equality movement has liberated women to the point at which it has suffocated men.  In her analysis, she argues that *The Stepford Wives* remake not only dismisses patriarchal subjugation  and gender discrimination by implying that career-oriented women are the source of their own constraints, but it also insinuates that heterosexual romance is the ultimate fulfillment for women.  Such depictions are commonly evoked through the rise of the romantic comedy since the 1990s, which Vint characterizes as a prime example of post-feminism that encourages women to pursue what really makes them happy, and supplies them with an answer—men, marriage, and motherhood—in the process (2007).  Faludi (1992) argues that such media portrayals were popularized after notions of the biological clock and the

man shortage were entered into popular culture by films and magazines in the 1990s. Age was magnified as a factor in women's ability to find and hold on to a husband, and feminism's achievements were blamed for causing women this pain and frustration. Although such portrayals are certainly not new to Western culture, they offer a thematic return to the films of a much earlier era, and are markedly different from the many more progressive depictions of women during the peak of second-wave feminism in the 1970s and early 80s (Faludi, 1992). Each of these points will be explored and addressed in this section, beginning with Vint's discussion of *The Stepford Wives*.

Vint (2007) claims that although post-feminist films position themselves as more current and, therefore, more enlightened by seeming to accept and celebrate women's wider role in public life, these movies actually work to subvert feminist values. Much like Faludi, Vint views post-feminism as a media-popularized backlash against feminist goals and achievements. In her discussion of *The Stepford Wives*, Vint observes how the 2005 remake of the 1975 film appears to offer a feminist thesis by depicting its heroine as a career woman rewarded by her independence with a good man and great career. However, Vint argues, this depiction is merely an anti-feminist construction, which "realizes that it is unlikely that women en masse will be forced back into the home and exclusively domestic roles," and instead "tries to distance women from feminism" by convincing them that equality has been achieved and that they should focus their lives elsewhere (Vint, 2007, p. 162). She theorizes that the remake exemplifies the post-feminist backlash as it depicts love as the solution to all problems while also parodying gender stereotypes in order to lead to a conclusion that makes feminism seem comedic and portrays feminism's arch-villain—patriarchal oppression—as silly and mistaken (Vint, 2007).

In order to set up its parody of gender stereotypes, the remake opens by evoking classic

stereotypes through showing images from 1950s advertisements suggesting that marriage, a

home full of consumer goods, and domestic bliss is what a woman really needs for ultimate

fulfillment (Vint, 2007).  The next shot introduces Joanna Eberhard, the main character, as the

"most successful president" in her company's history, suggesting that gender equality has been

achieved and that inequality is in the past (Vint, 2007).  After she is introduced, Eberhard

promotes two new reality game show programs about women who are more powerful and

successful than their husbands.  The first depicts the wife as a domineering breadwinner and the

husband as submissive, and the second depicts a husband and wife spending a weekend with

professional prostitutes before determining if they want to return to their marriage, only to show

the husband choosing to stay with the wife and the wife choosing to leave (Vint, 2007).  Vint

argues that not only do such portrayals presume patriarchal oppression to be dead and society to

be past the need for feminism, but they also express a "serious anxiety about a world in which

women rule" by positioning the man as the victim of women's freedom (Vint, 2007, p. 163).  In

one final parody of gender roles, the man whose wife left him comes on screen to propose his

own reality show, *Let's Kill All the Women*, before shooting Joanna, who is unharmed, but told

in the next scene that she will be fired because of the controversy (Vint, 2007).  This career crisis

leads Joanna, formerly a confident, empowered woman, to suffer a mental breakdown which

causes her husband Walter, formerly submissive to Joanna, to take control of their lives and

move the family to Stepford (Vint, 2007).

Vint discusses how the movie's parody of gender roles and suggestion that women are as

empowered as men is used to set up the movie's conclusion, which mocks the very serious

conclusion to the original *Stepford Wives*, in which it is implied that the real Joanna is strangled

by a robot duplicate designed by Stepford's male community to replace her.  In the remake, after

Joanna discovers that the Stepford men have replaced their wives with robots, and that her

husband was going to replace her with a robot too, post-feminist assumptions are reinforced

when her husband explains that he always felt extremely inadequate compared to her because she

is better educated, stronger, more intelligent, and makes more money (Vint, 2007).  Vint claims

that such an answer suggests Walter's resentment over his loss of gender privilege, and it also

implies that the feminist movement has gone too far because men in a post-feminist society are

often made to feel inferior to women (Vint, 2007).  Such a portrayal, according to Vint,

completely ignores that in the majority of cases, including the inequality of pay, women are still

subjected to far more discrimination than men (2007).  Contrasting this depiction with that of the

original movie, in which, after Joanna asks why the men want to make her into a robot, Walter

merely answers, "because we can," shows how post-feminist culture has the potential to

undermine social awareness of the need for feminist activism, so much so that a drama about

patriarchal oppression would be remade into a popular romantic comedy which suggests that not

only is patriarchal oppression dead, but that the feminist movement has transformed gender

discrimination into the woman's oppression of the man (Vint, 2007).

    According to Vint (2007), the conclusion to the remake—in which Joanna forgives her

husband to satiate her instincts for romance, and they uncover that the leader of the Stepford men

is in fact a robot who had been created by the real man's jealous wife—presents its greatest

backlash against feminism (Vint, 2007).  Vint argues that this conclusion, when viewed along

with the rest of the film, suggests that not only is society so past the need for feminism that men

are treated as inferior to women, but that other women—namely powerful women with

ingenuity—are the source of liberated women's problems, not men.  This analysis leads Vint to

conclude that this remake is yet another example of how the chick flicks and romantic comedies of today sell women a version of the world as a "post-feminist utopia," in which feminism is "made to seem ridiculous and passé in its insistence on talking about gender discrimination," allowing sexism to continue unchecked, out of sight, and out of mind (Vint, 2007, p. 162).

Another example of how, over time, feminist film depictions evolved into portrayals of women as dependent on heterosexual romance for fulfillment is offered by Barger (2011).  She theorizes that contrasting the films *Nine to Five*, which came out in 1980 near the end of the second-wave feminist movement, to *The Devil Wears Prada*, a 2006 film considered by theorists to be heavy in post-feminist sentiment, exposes how far society has regressed over time in its cultural assumptions about women.  Her discussion of these films exposes how media post-feminism works by selling women a false sense of empowered individualism to alienate them from the collective struggle for equal rights embodied by second-wave feminism.  Barger posits that such a comparison demonstrates the post-feminist culture in Hollywood and outlines its participation in the post-feminist backlash against women, one that transitioned popular film from depictions of women's collective struggle against working place issues of sexual harassment, gender inequality, and discrimination to depictions of women as isolated individuals unable to assert themselves in a cold consumer world without renouncing romance and femininity, which are depicted as the only natural sources of female power (2011).

Barger describes that although *Nine to Five* is imperfect, it is largely a feminist movie about a group of three very ordinary women—one of whom is a divorced, displaced homemaker forced to work after her husband leaves for another woman, while another is a widowed single mother of four—who collectively and successfully stand together in revolt against their sexist, patriarchal boss.  On the other hand, *The Devil Wears Prada* ignores the feminist issues of

gender inequality and assumes that because this state has passed, liberated women should place a premium on the brand of attractiveness emphasized by consumer culture, even if this factor has no effect on a woman's intelligence and ability to perform her job (Barger, 2011).

Barger further classifies *The Devil Wears Prada* as a form of chick lit post-feminism, one which emphasizes the empowerment and independence for liberated women to choose their path in life only to suggest the conservative, anti-feminist notion that it is too much to expect for women to truly balance a demanding career and romantic relationship.  This type of portrayal, which embodies post-feminism to a tee, is shown at the end of the film, when Andy, a former ugly duckling turned sexy post-feminist heroine, tells her boss Miranda that she does not want to be like her, quits her job, and reconciles with her boyfriend (Barger, 2011).  The post-feminist nature of this depiction is clear because, throughout the movie, Miranda is depicted as a ruthless, domineering, cutthroat boss who has had two failed marriages and is symbolically so anti-feminine that she could not have children naturally, but instead had to have them through surrogates (Barger, 2011).  Thus Miranda, the devil who wears Prada, comes to represent an unnatural, titularly demonized ultra-feminist, much like the depictions of feminists in the 1980s that initiated the backlash (Barger, 2011).  This portrayal leads Barger to the assumption that *The Devil Wears Prada* "reeks with fear of female power" (Barger, 2011, p. 345).  Through this projection, the film rejects the collectivist activism and blaming of patriarchy evidenced in *Nine to Five*, instead blaming its main character's maltreatment on her hateful, aggressive female boss.

The answer *The Devil Wears Prada* provides to the female dilemma is shown through its protagonist's rejection of careerism out of fear of becoming like Miranda.  As is the custom in chick post-feminism, Andy's decision to make love and romance her main priority is upheld as

the solution to all that ails women. The contrast between *The Devil Wears Prada*'s advice for women is starkly different from the lesson offered in *Nine to Five*, whose wily protagonists kidnap their inept patriarchal boss and change the management of their workplace (Barger, 2011). Although this story is portrayed in a humorous fashion, with their boss eventually being freed and promoted after taking credit for the positive changes made by the protagonists, the movie ultimately concludes with the women in charge of their office and engaged in a celebratory toast (Barger, 2011). Such a conclusion, however humorous it may be, both demonstrates the collective progress made by women in their struggle for equal rights and serves as a reminder that patriarchy has not yet been defeated, for this victory is only one small improvement in the war for equality. Such observations led Barger to conclude that, although old classics such as *Nine to Five* helped form the basis for a truly feminist comedy, current films like *The Devil Wears Prada* mark the abandonment of such projects altogether.

Instead, such portrayals convey that women cannot manage both a career, which is depicted as an option, with romance and maternity, which are depicted as priorities; the result is that women juggling innumerable responsibilities must inevitably make a choice between the two. Although post-feminist media reinforce that this decision is strictly the empowered woman's choice to make, in post-feminism, love always triumphs (Barger, 2011). Post-feminist culture is thus drenched with rhetoric to pressure women into choosing the traditional, conservative outcome, although it attempts to seem neutral (McRobbie, 2004). As a result, Barger theorizes a bleak future in which the "female narrative film will not look much different until society reimagines women's power, or creative individuals break with Hollywood's stranglehold on the representations of women" (Barger, 2011, p. 349).

"Shmooshmortion" and the Depoliticization of Women's Reproductive Rights

Scholars agree that another negative aspect of post-feminist culture, as discussed previously, is the depoliticization of issues critical to the women's rights movement. Feminist scholar Pamela Thoma (2009), as well as Kristen Hoerl and Casey Ryan Kelly (2010), argue that three popular 2007 films, *Knocked Up*, *Juno*, and *Waitress*, each depoliticize unplanned pregnancy and the viability of abortion in a way that marginalizes women outside of the white, middle-to-upper class feminine ideal, for whom carrying unwanted pregnancies to term may be economically unfeasible. These scholars argue that *Knocked Up* and *Juno* make the basic assumption that gender equality has been achieved and that abortion is an option easily accessible to all women, excluding mention of the high cost of abortion, the unavailability of procuring one in many areas across the U.S., and the social stigma still attached to it. However, when the protagonists in these films find themselves with an unwanted pregnancy, abortion becomes the unspeakable word in *Knocked Up*, and the undoable act in *Juno*, suggesting birth as the axiomatic choice and decision of moral high-ground (Thoma, 2009).

This depiction of abortion is most noticeable in *Knocked Up*, in which the decision to have an abortion is both parodied and suggested as taboo (Hoerl & Kelly, 2010). After the male protagonist, Ben, learns that he has impregnated the female protagonist, Allison, following a one-night stand, his friend Jay remarks, "tell me you don't want him to get an A word!," to which another friend replies, "I won't say it for your little baby ears over there, but it rhymes with shmooshmortion" (Hoerl & Kelly, 2010, p. 369). Despite the fact that Ben and Allison just met each other, Ben is a bum, and Allison is launching a career, the decision is discounted as quickly as it is brought up. Even more concerning is that this movie, as well as *Juno*, depicts its male and female protagonists as falling in love by the film's ending, associating the birth of a

child and the romance that follows as indicative of a woman's maternal instincts. This portrayal

allows the romance that follows to be interpreted as the result of a woman's affinity for maternal

love, which completes her ideal, empowered feminine identity. Neither movie illustrates the

future complications that either couple will likely have in their ensuing relationship. *Knocked*

*Up* ends with the birth of the baby, and its slacker, formerly-unemployed male protagonist finds

a good job. Thus, the movie completely refuses to answer how the new parents would both

support their child under the previous economic conditions, which adheres again to the socially

ideal white, middle-class couple, marginalizing single expecting mothers and couples who fall

outside the perceived normative bracket (Hoerl & Kelly, 2010).

 *Juno* appears to be far more forward-thinking in its depiction of dealing with

reproductive rights than either *Knocked Up* or *Waitress*, as Juno, the film's teenage protagonist,

remarks about abortion in a forward-thinking, positive light after she finds out her friend Paulie

impregnated her (Hoerl & Kelly, 2010). Also, her eventual decision to put the baby up for

adoption rather than struggle to keep it and raise it as a single mother, adds to the perception of

the movie as progressive. However, a close observation of the film exposes its problematic

depiction of abortion and reproductive rights. For instance, one specific scene that depoliticizes

women's reproductive rights occurs when Juno goes to an abortion clinic to end her unwanted

pregnancy. While she is in the waiting room, a foreign classmate, Su-Chin, is protesting

abortion outside. Juno recognizes the student and walks over to talk to Su-Chin, who remembers

to tell Juno that "all babies have a beating heart, feel pain, and have fingernails!" (Hoerl & Kelly,

2010, p. 369). Although this scene is intended to produce a humorous effect, it nevertheless

makes the assumptions that life occurs at the moment of conception and that a fetus is a living

child. Thus, the "decision to terminate a pregnancy" is ultimately treated as "shameful," and

Juno decides to carry her unplanned pregnancy to term in order to "maintain her moral virtue" (Hoerl & Kelly, 2010, p. 366).

Contrary to *Juno* and *Knocked Up*, *Waitress* does not assume that its protagonist, Jenna, is in an egalitarian relationship with her husband Earl, who abuses and controls her; however, this film is still heavily post-feminist in sensibility, and its depoliticization of unplanned pregnancy is arguably more conspicuous than in either of the other films (Thoma, 2009). After discovering she is pregnant, Jenna repeatedly expresses her blatant disdain for having a child. In one instance, when she is shopping for a crib, she "imagines a letter" to her future child: "Your crib was bought with the money that was supposed to buy me a new life. Every time I lay you down in that damn crib, I'm going to think, damn baby, damn crib" (Hoerl & Kelly, 2010, p. 367). Yet the decision to have an abortion is immediately dispelled as illegitimate when she tells her obstetrician that although she does not want the child, she is going to have it and raise it anyway. The most troubling aspect of the movie in its depoliticization of unplanned pregnancy and disregard for the serious economic constraints dealt with by women who choose to give birth under impoverished circumstances comes at the film's conclusion, in which it is revealed that Joe, the owner of the diner in which Jenna works, has conveniently dropped dead, and left her a considerable sum of money to care for the child for the rest of its life (Thoma, 2009, p. 414). This scene takes place directly after Jenna gives birth in the hospital, an act which symbolically empowers Jenna and enables "her to confidently make her own choices" (p. 414). Jenna tells Earl that he will never touch her again and breaks off an affair she had begun with her obstetrician while she was under his care. Collectively, these two scenes show that although the film is quick to disregard abortion as a negative choice, it never deals with the question of how, under normative circumstances, poor, single mothers are to be equipped to deal with the

constraints of raising a child in abject economic poverty.  Furthermore, the film embraces the

post-feminist notion of women being inherently maternal and even suggests that maternal

instincts are a genuine source of female empowerment, as the act of giving birth miraculously

allows Jenna to make a feminist decision by ditching Earl.  This film portrayal depoliticizes

unplanned pregnancy and reproductive rights even more so than the others, as it dangerously

implies that, if maternity empowers women, then having the child is always the best decision for

women no matter the circumstances because, obviously, having a baby will make everything just

fine (Thoma, 2009).

<center>The Oppositional Argument</center>

Some past research, however, claims that the assumptions promoted by post-feminist

media culture have not yet been culturally internalized.  The content analysis performed by Hall

and Rodriguez (2003), who conducted an internet search of cue words related to feminism, the

women's movement, and post-feminism to generate a list of four key post-feminist themes

derived from readings of scholarly and popular media sources published between 1990 and 2003,

provides support for the argument that the consequences posed by a post-feminist movement in

America are a myth (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003).  The study's researchers set out to debunk

scholars' claims that post-feminist media influence had catalyzed a decrease in support for

feminism among the general public during this span of time.  The study cited Faludi and other

scholars who claim that most women now reject feminism because of the media's successful

campaign to discredit its goals and distort its message (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003).  Hall and

Rodriguez first searched Researcher's Guide, Sociological Abstracts, and Lexus Nexus search

engines to identify articles that directly addressed attitudes about feminism or the women's

movement.  After eliminating duplicate articles and those that were only peripherally relevant,

their final analysis included 62 popular and 28 research sources. The 62 popular sources "were found in 27 magazines, 2 newspaper articles, and 2 books, with the most common publications being *Time* and *Ms.*" (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003, p. 881). Research sources, on the other hand, were derived from 15 scholarly journals that represented political science, psychology, sociology, and women's studies. The authors then identified four key claims from the post-feminist argument—that overall support for feminism had waned, that pockets of antifeminist resistance had risen among minorities, that many now considered feminism to be irrelevant, and that a form of "no, but…" feminism—a product of post-feminism—had been popularized (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003). Finally, the researchers used public opinion data from 1980 to 1999 to test their hypotheses.

Once the articles had been selected and the themes identified, the researchers found that, in agreement with their hypotheses, each of the post-feminist arguments was currently unsubstantiated by public opinion data at the time of the study (Hall & Rodriguez, 2003). Their results indicated that support for the women's movement had increased or remained stable over time, that minorities remained supportive of the movement instead of becoming pockets of anti-feminism, and that opinions regarding the relevance of the women's movement remained unchanged. It is important to note, however, that Hall and Rodriguez agree with feminist media theorists that popular media emphasize post-feminism, posing a potential backlash that "may create a future reality in which collective struggle is deemed unnecessary," thus opening the door for potentially serious social consequences for women and women's rights (2003, p. 899). The authors' concession in this case reveals that, although their research lends support for the hypothesis that post-feminism has not yet been culturally internalized, they acknowledge that post-feminist influence is certainly out there and that media do propagate post-feminism to be a

legitimate frame of interpretation. The threat of continued post-feminist media influence, Hall and Rodriguez claim, is the "ultimate danger of the post-feminist argument" (2003, p. 899).

Implications of Literature Review

Given that post-feminist culture remains a hotly discussed topic within the field of feminist media studies, that Hall & Rodriguez's content analysis was conducted almost a decade ago, and that since then scholars have begun focusing on the problems posed by the exploitation of young women as a target demographic among post-feminist media, it seems apparent that research should be done to address post-feminism's influence on young adult women's perceptions. Although Hall and Rodriguez's study is noteworthy, it merely analyzed the pre-existing perceptions of society toward feminism at a given time. Because film and television analyses provide the groundwork for a number of scholarly texts discussing post-feminist media influence, research must be conducted to gauge the influence of post-feminism within those types of media and the extent to which this propaganda has the ability to shape its audience's perceptions. Press (2011) echoes these opinions, stating that there exists a current lack of knowledge concerning the actual experiences and attitudes of those most affected by these issues. Only through further research can scholars estimate the extent to which these theories and their consequences are limited, the answer to which may pose important implications for the women's movement and women's rights issues alike. Such revelations are the goal of the following survey study, which aspires to determine the extent to which the consequences of post-feminist media content—both through film and other media—shapes young women's attitudes toward feminism and key women's rights issues.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As summarized in the literature review section, post-feminist cultural sensibility is seen by most feminist scholars to be an anti-feminist sensibility, one that suggests to its female audience that the goals of the women's movement have been achieved and that the public struggle for social equality and fair treatment is no longer necessary. Therefore, post-feminist assumptions may be defined as anti-feminist assumptions because they are in opposition to the core values of feminism. As a result, in defining this study's subject material, the researcher concluded that, the greater degree of post-feminist assumptions, the more regressive are their views toward feminism and women's rights issues. The goal of the survey is to discover the extent to which post-feminist media sway women into thinking that feminist issues are no longer critical because equality has been achieved. It seems that the best way to determine how effective post-feminist media are in detracting support from the feminist movement is to survey women about how much thematically post-feminist media content they view to test for a correlation between viewing post-feminist content and agreeing with post-feminist assumptions that feminism is no longer important and that advocacy for women's rights issues is no longer critical. The following study will suggest the extent to which viewing post-feminist film, television, and literary content results in women internalizing and self-reporting post-feminist assumptions. The study could also provide insight into whether or not spending a greater amount of time as a college student results in a weaker correlation than spending a smaller amount of time as a college student, which might shed light on how effective a prolonged college education can be at spreading awareness for feminist issues.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on scholarly research that suggests women internalize messages disseminated through post-feminist media, the research questions and hypotheses for this study are as follows:

**R 1:** Is there a positive statistical correlation between viewing post-feminist film, television, and literary content and agreeing with post-feminist assumptions about feminism and key women's rights issues?

**H 1:** The results of this study will indicate a positive statistical correlation between viewing post-feminist film, television, and literary content and agreeing with post-feminist assumptions about feminism and key women's rights issues.

**R 2:** If the first hypothesis is confirmed, do the results of this study indicate that the correlation between post-feminist viewership and attitudes is stronger for students enrolled in lower-level classes than it is for students enrolled in upper-level classes?

**H 2**: If the first hypothesis is confirmed, the results of this study will indicate that the correlation between post-feminist viewership and attitudes is stronger for lower-level students than upper-level students.

If the first hypothesis is confirmed, the findings will imply that scholarly opinions on the subject of post-feminism's influence are correct. This predicted result would support the notion that women internalize post-feminist culture and that women who enjoy this sort of content are more likely to disregard the idea that gender inequality remains a critical issue. Additionally, if the second hypothesis is confirmed, it could shed light on the effectiveness of a prolonged college education toward spreading awareness for women's rights issues and combating post-feminist media propaganda.

The Sample Group

Because this study strove to assess the influence of post-feminist media content on young adult women, the sampling frame for this study consisted only of females between the ages of 18 and 25. To recruit participants for the research, e-mails were sent to the English faculty at Shawnee State University and the Journalism faculty at Marshall University requesting that instructors permit students in their classes to participate. After instructors gave permission for their students to take the surveys, the materials, including the IRB anonymous consent forms, were distributed among participating classes. A total of 119 surveys were included in the final results.

In order to determine that all members of the sample group were within the desired age frame of 18-25, participants were required to indicate whether they were male or female and under or over the age of 25. According to the anonymous consent form, participants indicated that they were 18 years of age or older simply by completing and returning the survey.

The only additional information recorded was whether the students who participated in the survey were enrolled in an upper- or lower-level class. This measure was taken so that the researcher could observe the correlations between viewing post-feminist media content and reporting post-feminist assumptions for three separate groups (See Appendix A), including students in lower-level classes, those in upper-level classes, and both groups combined. This decision was made in order to observe whether upper-level college students, who have likely had more exposure to feminist perspectives than those in lower-level classes, would generate a lower correlation between the viewership and attitudinal variables than lower-level students, who have presumably had less exposure to feminist ideologies.

The Survey Structure

Hard copies of the survey (See Appendix B), which contained a list of ten questions and a separate list of ten prompts, were distributed among the classes whose instructors had volunteered to let students take the survey.  The first list of questions was designed to gauge how often participants in the sample group viewed types of post-feminist film, television, and literary content.  The second list included prompts, or post-feminist statements regarding women's issues, designed to determine how strongly participants agreed with post-feminist assumptions about feminism and women's rights issues.  It is important to reiterate that the list of attitudinal prompts was designed based on the four consequences of a post-feminist media culture—the depiction of sexuality as a woman's primary source of power, the media-created notion of a women's sexual liberation and the paradox this poses for women, the popularization of the "chick flick" ideology that heterosexual love is the solution to all that ails women, and the depoliticization of women's reproductive rights—that were identified based on an analysis of scholarly research throughout the literature review.  This measure was taken to ensure that the following research could shed light on how pervasively these consequences are becoming a reality in today's society.  Responses to both parts of the survey were assessed using a four-point Likert scale.

The researcher contacted Ann Linden, the Women's Center coordinator at Shawnee State University, to form a panel of experts to assist in the identification of current or recent post-feminist films, television shows, and literature, and the examples proposed at a Women's Center Advisory Committee meeting were used to help frame the questions designed to gauge how often participants watched post-feminist content.   A large extent of the post-feminist media content

referenced in scholarly journals is outdated and no longer popular, so examples of current, popular post-feminist media were referenced to develop the list of questions instead.

Available responses to the list of questions concerning how often participants viewed post-feminist media content included "rarely, if ever," "occasionally," "often," and "regularly." On the other hand, available responses to the list of attitudinal prompts, which were used to determine how strongly participants agreed with post-feminist assumptions, included "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," and "strongly agree." Response options for each list were assigned point values ranging from -2, -1, to 1 and 2. After the surveys were submitted, the total points for each of the variables were tabulated to determine the aggregate scores for each participant. For the set of questions, the higher the score reported, the more frequently participants viewed post-feminist media content. For the set of prompts, the higher the score reported, the more strongly participants agreed with the post-feminist assumptions made by the prompts. As stated previously, a positive correlation was predicted between the independent variable, viewership of post-feminist media content, and the dependent variable, agreement with post-feminist assumptions.

Statistical Test Chosen

The statistical method chosen by the researcher in this study to determine the correlation between viewing post-feminist media content and agreeing with post-feminist assumptions was the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. The confidence level for determining the correlation's statistical significance was set at the .01 level, which established a one percent tolerance level.

Chapter 4: Findings (See Appendix C)

The survey responses of Group A, which consisted of 74 students enrolled in lower-level college classes, yielded a positive Pearson's r correlation of .416 between the independent variable, media viewership, and the dependent variable, attitude. This correlation relation was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level. The mean score for samples on the viewership variable was -6.31 with a standard deviation of 6.35. Additionally, the mean score for samples on the attitudinal variable was -1.12 with a standard deviation of 6.57. Furthermore, the Coefficient of Determination was calculated at .173 for Group A, which estimated that the viewership of post-feminist content accounted for a 17% influence in attitude.

Group B, on the other hand, contained 45 students enrolled in upper-level college classes, and this group's responses resulted in a positive Pearson's r correlation of .154, which was not found to be statistically significant at either the .01 or .05 levels. The mean score for samples on the viewership variable was -4.24 with a standard deviation of 8.54, and the mean score on attitude was -1.73 with a standard deviation 5.45. The Coefficient of Determination was calculated at .023, which projected that the viewership of post-feminist content only accounted for a 2% influence in attitude for this group.

Lastly, Group C contained Groups A and B combined, and this group, comprised of 119 sample participants, generated a positive Pearson's r correlation of .292, a number that was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level. The mean score on viewership for Group C was -5.53 with a standard deviation of 7.29, and the mean score for attitude was -1.35 with a standard deviation of 6.15. The Coefficient of Determination for Group C was calculated at .085, which implied that the viewership of post-feminist content accounted for slightly under 9% of the influence in attitude for this group.

After the composite scores for all 119 samples were observed, percentages of each group's reaction to post-feminism were calculated to indicate the percentage of participants whose responses indicated positive-leaning, negative-leaning, and mixed reactions to post-feminist content and attitudes.    Because the previously calculated mean scores for the viewership and attitudinal variables were negative for both upper- and lower-level students, most students' responses leaned negatively in their reaction to post-feminism; however, the number of lower-level students whose responses indicated a positive-leaning reaction to post-feminist viewership and attitude was higher than the number that exhibited a negative attitudinal reaction and positive viewership score.  For instance, 12% percent of lower-level student participants, or 9  out of 74 samples, indicated positive reactions to post-feminism, while only one respondent, or 1 % of lower-level students, indicated a positive viewership score with a negative attitudinal reaction. On the contrary, however, 7 out of 45 upper-level student participants, or approximately 16% of that specific population, indicated a positive viewership score with a negative attitudinal reaction, and only 6 of these students, or approximately 13% of the population, expressed a positive-leaning attitude toward both variables.  Furthermore, 41 out of 74 lower-level students, or 55% of the population, displayed negative-leaning attitude and viewership scores, while 22 out of 45 upper-level students, 49% of the population, demonstrated negative-leaning reactions to post-feminism.  Additionally, 23 lower-level students, or 31% of the population, indicated a positive attitude toward post-feminism even though the viewership score was negative, while only 10 upper-level students, or 22%, exhibited a positive attitude toward post-feminism and a negative viewership score.  If a sample's responses indicated a neutral composite score of 0 for either the viewership or attitudinal variable, that sample was labeled as leaning positively or negatively based on whether the composite score for the other

variable was positive or negative.  To elaborate, a sample score with a composite attitudinal

score of 0 would have been labeled as negative-leaning if the viewership score was -2, and the

opposite would have been the case if the viewership score was 2.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Because McRobbie (2008) and Karlyn (2006) argue that young teenage women, including pre-teens, are primary targets for the rhetoric promoted by post-feminist media, this research offers insight into the role of a college education's ability to combat post-feminist rhetoric. The Pearson's r correlations generated for each group shed light on post-feminist media's ability to influence college-age women, and the different correlations among lower-level students, upper-level students, and both groups combined provide some insight into how strongly post-feminist media affect each of the groups categorized in this research. Although the following discussion of findings that stem from this data is important, as it offers glances into the populations of female college students that could be most vulnerable to post-feminist messages, future research will ultimately be necessary in order to determine how post-feminism influences young teenagers as well as 18-25 year old women who do not attend college.

The first important finding is that the responses of both Group A—lower-level students— and Group C—upper- and lower-level students combined—indicate statistically significant correlations at the .01 level between viewing post-feminist media content and agreeing with post-feminist assumptions about women's rights issues, which supports the researcher's first hypothesis. The .416 Pearson's r correlation for Group A implies that a positive relationship exists between post-feminist media viewership and agreement with post-feminism. To contextualize this information, the late statistician J.P. Guilford stated that a Pearson's r correlation between .40-.70 would indicate a "moderate correlation" and "substantial relationship" between the two variables being measured in the correlation (as cited in Sprinthall, 2012, p. 305). Moreover, a .173 Coefficient of Determination estimates that 17% of the sample

population's attitude toward feminism is accounted for by the content they view.  Although Group C's responses reinforce the trend witnessed in Group A, the correlation is not as strong.

The .292 correlation for Group C, upper- and lower-level students together, shows that although it is significant at the .01 level, which supports the researcher's first hypothesis, it is weaker than the correlation indicated by Group A, just lower-level students.  For context, Guilford claimed that a correlation between .20-.40 would indicate a "low [positive] correlation" and "definite but small relationship" (as cited in Sprinthall, 2012, p. 305).  Although this statement implies that a relationship still exists between viewing post-feminist media and agreeing with their assumptions when upper- and lower-level students are combined into one group, the relationship is notably stronger when upper-level students are excluded from the results.  Furthermore, the Coefficient of Determination for Group C is .085.  This statistic estimates that post-feminist viewership accounts for less of a rise in post-feminist attitude, only 9%, when upper-level students are included in the results, down from the 17% relationship suggested when students in lower-level classes are isolated from the rest of the population. This finding raises the need to contemplate why the scores of Group B—upper-level students— differed so strongly from the results of Group A.

Although the results of both Group A—lower-level students—and C—upper-level students—indicate statistically significant correlations between viewing post-feminist media and agreeing with post-feminist assumptions, the .154 correlation from group B, upper-level students, implies a "slight" and "almost negligible relationship" between the aforementioned variables.  It is important to note that this finding supports the researcher's second hypothesis that the Pearson's r correlation would be higher for lower-level students than upper-level students.  One possible explanation is that upper-level college students may be more likely to

watch the examples of post-feminist media referenced in the questions designed to estimate how frequently participants viewed this type of content. To elaborate, Group B's mean score for viewership is -4.24, while Group A's mean score for the same variable is -6.31; this result implies that, at least in this example, upper-level college students are more likely to watch post-feminist content than lower-level college students. A potential explanation for this finding might be that, although the media referenced in the viewership questions are intended to be as up-to-date and popular as possible, many of these media examples rose to popularity while today's upper-level college students were lower-level students.

The previously calculated percentages of lower-level and upper-level students whose responses were mostly positive, negative, or mixed provides some support for scholars' claims that post-feminist media are effective at targeting young women (See Appendix D). For example, although 12% of lower-level students report positive scores on both the viewership and attitudinal variables, only 1% of these participants react negatively toward post-feminist viewership but positively toward post-feminist attitudes. Although 9 of the 10 lower-level students who scored positively on viewership also scored positively on attitude, only 1 lower-level participant scored negatively on attitude while also scoring positively on viewership. Because viewership is the X variable in this case that is said to predict Y, this finding implies that, at least among lower-level students, more frequent viewership of post-feminist content appears to be associated with positive attitudes toward the content. On the contrary, however, 16% of upper-level students scored negatively on attitude while scoring positively on viewership, and 13% scored positively on both variables. Although close to the same percentage of upper-level students (13%) react positively to post-feminist content as lower-level students (12%), upper-level students were more likely to score negatively on the attitudinal

variable while scoring positively on the viewership variable, which suggests that the viewership of post-feminist content alone is not as strong a predictor for determining attitudes toward post-feminist content among upper-level students.  This finding could result from upper-level students' increased exposure to courses in college that might introduce them to feminist concepts, yet it is additionally important to note that, surprisingly, a greater percentage of upper-level students' scores (13%) indicated positive-leaning reactions to post-feminism than lower-level students' scores (12%).  This result, however, could stem from how, as previously noted, upper-level students' scores generate a -4.24 mean for post-feminist viewership, while lower-level students' scores result in a -6.31 mean for that variable, which implies that upper-level students are more likely to watch the post-feminist content identified in this survey.   At the same time, lower-level students' -1.12 mean score on the attitudinal questions is less negative than the -1.73 score reported by upper-level students, which suggests that although upper-level students seem to watch more post-feminist content, they are, on average, less likely to agree with the assumptions made by this type of media.

A final note of relevance is that the previously reported viewership and attitudinal mean scores are negative for both lower- and upper-level students, which suggests that college women do not generally watch post-feminist media or agree with the assumptions they promote.  This result also indicates that, at least among female college students, the consequences of a post-feminist media culture are not yet becoming fully realized.  However, because the results of this study imply that there is a relationship between viewing and agreeing with post-feminist media in spite of the finding that college women are not likely to watch or agree with this content, future research should be done to suggest which populations of women are the likeliest to view

these media and whether or not it is probable for these women to agree with the assumptions

promoted by the content they consume.

Chapter 6: Implications

The results of this survey seem to provide support for feminist theorists' claims that young women who are avid viewers of thematically post-feminist media often internalize the anti-feminist propaganda to which they are subjected, though the results in no way indicate causality or establish directionality. Future research should be conducted to suggest the extent to which a college education spreads awareness of feminist issues in order to combat post-feminist media influence. The implications of this future research could be relevant to collegiate Women's Center programs as they spread awareness of women's rights issues throughout their local communities.

Because the results of this study suggest that post-feminist media viewership could be a factor in predicting women's attitudes regarding women's rights issues, further research should be done to better establish the role that higher education has in mitigating the consequences of a post-feminist media culture. Because the Pearson's r correlation between the viewership and attitude variables is stronger in the population of lower-level college students, and the correlation is lower in the population of upper-level college students, future research should attempt to survey a group of teenagers under 18 years old as well as a group of women aged 18-25 with no college education. If these extra populations are in place, the correlations could be compared from one group to the other in order to observe how significantly college experience may affect the correlation between the two variables. Furthermore, because the means calculated for the attitudinal and viewership variables are consistently negative among all three groups of college students surveyed in this study, future research could help illustrate the viewership habits and attitudinal stances of young women outside of college.

The results of these comparisons and future research could pose important implications for Women's Center programs at universities who try to spread community awareness for women's rights issues.  This research is especially important when considering that only 1 out of 10 lower-level students who reported positive post-feminist viewership also reported a negative attitude toward post-feminism.  Although these women do not generally appear to frequently consume post-feminist media, the results suggest that those who do seem to internalize post-feminist assumptions.  Given that the result for upper-level students suggests the opposite, that post-feminist viewership is not a significant predictor for agreement with post-feminist attitudes, it seems that future research is needed to discover the populations that are most susceptible to becoming influenced by post-feminist messages. This research would help Women's Center programs, educators, and women's rights activists to identify which groups of people to target with their messages.  Additionally, if responses from young women outside of the college population demonstrate a significantly more positive correlation, then Women's Center programs and women's rights groups in general could advertise awareness workshops within their communities to spread their messages to the most vulnerable populations affected by this problem.  Third-wave feminists could also identify the specific populations that are most targeted by post-feminist messages and the extent to which these messages decrease support for genuine feminist values, which may indicate the need for the movement to further distinguish itself from post-feminism so that young women have a strong, current platform from which to combat the consequences of post-feminist ideology.  Moreover, perhaps media makers could better understand the populations that are affected by post-feminist rhetoric and how negatively it can alter young women's perceptions and self-esteem.  If these content creators have the ability to influence viewers' perceptions through the media they produce, perhaps spreading awareness of

this problem could motivate members of the film and television industries to combat post-feminist ideologies through future productions. One last implication for media consumers is that, although it is unknown whether diversified media viewership can combat the spread of hegemonic views, this research suggests that consuming too much of the same type of media can lead to potentially negative consequences.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

There are some limitations to this study that could be improved for future research. The majority of research into the effects of post-feminism suggests that young women, including younger teenagers, represent the primary demographic that is targeted by post-feminist messages. Therefore, the lack of access to populations of non-collegiate 18-25 year olds and women under 18 is the greatest limitation of this study. The results could better illustrate whether or not college education is a factor that can skew women's attitudes toward post-feminism, which would alter the correlations.

An additional limitation of the research is that some of the examples referenced in the media questions are not as frequently watched by students in lower-level classes, which might be because these media examples achieved popularity while students currently in upper-level classes were in lower-level classes. In order to avoid this issue in the future, the Nielsen ratings should be consulted after a panel of experts establishes a list of current post-feminist media from which to select examples. This tactic would provide an extra step to ensure that the content referenced as examples in media questions is popular among the target age group.

Lastly, a final limitation of this study is that all participants attended either Shawnee State University or Marshall University, both of which are located in the Appalachian region of the United States. The population within this region is predominantly Caucasian and known for

embracing viewpoints that are perhaps more traditional or conservative than those commonly

valued in other parts of the United States.  Therefore, this sample is not representative of the

nation's population as a whole.

<div align="center">Final Thoughts</div>

By repeating these measures along with the previously suggested minor alterations, future

researchers should be able to improve society's understanding of how post-feminist media

content influences young women's attitudes toward feminism.  Although the results of this study

suggest that there is a positive relationship between viewing post-feminist media and agreeing

with post-feminist assumptions, future research is needed to illustrate the populations in which

post-feminist media hold the greatest influence to shape attitudes.  If women outside of college

and under age 18 are included as sample groups in future research, it could help explain how

strongly college influence can impede the internalization of post-feminist propaganda.  The

results of such a study, therefore, could bring important findings to universities, Women's Center

organizations, and women's advocacy groups alike.

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**Appendix A**

<u>Group Information</u>

<u>Separate *r* correlations were run for three groups:</u>

- Group A (students enrolled in lower-level classes)

- Group B (students enrolled in upper-level classes)

- Group C (the population as a whole)

The higher a score is on viewership (the X variable), the more frequently a participant watches post-feminist content.

The higher a score is toward attitude (the Y variable), the more strongly a participant agrees with post-feminist assumptions.

**Appendix B**

Two-Part Survey for Research Project

The purpose of the following two-part survey/questionnaire is to determine the extent to which media preferences can shape attitudes.  Each part includes 10 questions.  All student responses will remain anonymous.  Participation in this survey is **not** mandatory.

Any questions regarding this survey can be directed to Professor Chris Swindell (swindell@marshall.edu), Professor Janet Dooley (dooley@marshall.edu), or Instructor Jed Bailey (bailey283@marshall.edu; jbailey@shawnee.edu).

**Introductory Questions -** *For the following questions, please circle the appropriate response.*

1.  Are you **over** the age of 25?                                        (yes)              (no)

2.  Circle "M" if you are male or "F" if you are female.        (M)              (F)

**Attitudinal Survey Prompts –** *For each prompt, circle the response that best matches your opinion.*

1.       Physical attractiveness is a strong source of female power and independence.

         (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)        (strongly agree)


2.       Freedom to make consumer choices is a major example of how women have been empowered by society.

         (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)        (strongly agree)


3.       Sexism is not nearly as prevalent in today's society as it was three decades ago.

         (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)        (strongly agree)

4.      Women's equality has mostly been achieved.

        (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)         (strongly agree)

5.      Women's reproductive rights (the right to birth control, abortion, etc.) have successfully been achieved.

        (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)         (strongly agree)

6.      Women have been sexually liberated (they are far more free to do as they please without social stigma than they used to be).

        (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)         (strongly agree)

7.      Women's sexual attractiveness is a valuable commodity.

        (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)         (strongly agree)

8.      Romantic relationships are necessary to help women feel fulfilled.

        (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)         (strongly agree)

9.      Since it is difficult to manage both a career and relationship/motherhood, women should often choose between the two.

        (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)         (strongly agree)

10.     Since women are now respected and treated as equal to men, women can be open about their sexuality without fear of repercussion.

        (strongly disagree)     (disagree)      (agree)         (strongly agree)

**Viewership Questionnaire –** *For each question, circle the response that best describes how you often you view the following content.*

1) How often do you watch reality television shows featuring female celebrities or wealthy housewives, such as *Mob Wives*, *Basketball Wives, The Real Housewives*, and *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* (and related series)?

   (rarely, if ever)          (occasionally)          (often)          (regularly)

2) How often do you watch makeover shows, such as either *What Not to Wear* or *America's Next Top Model?*

   (rarely, if ever)          (occasionally)          (often)          (regularly)

3) How often do you read or watch romantic dramas such as *Twilight* (and related series/movies)?

   (rarely, if ever)          (occasionally)          (often)          (regularly)

4) How often do you read or watch erotic romance literature such as *Fifty Shades of Grey***,** in which female leads participate in sexual fantasies related to BDSM (Bondage/Domination/Submission/Masochism)?

   (rarely, if ever)          (occasionally)          (often)          (regularly)

5) How often do you watch comedies such as *Juno* or *Knocked* Up, which parody the experience of a young couple dealing with an unwanted/unplanned pregnancy?

   (rarely, if ever)          (occasionally)          (often)          (regularly)

6) How often do you watch television shows that portray middle-aged women seeking relationships with men for fulfillment, such as *Sex and the City* and *Desperate Housewives*?

   (rarely, if ever)          (occasionally)          (often)          (regularly)

7) How often do you watch romantic comedies such as *The Devil Wears Prada, Bridget Jones' Diary, Bridesmaids, He's Just Not That Into You,* and *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, in which the female lead character finds a romantic male counterpart?

    (rarely, if ever)        (occasionally)        (often)        (regularly)


8) How often do you watch reality shows that portray traditional gender roles as the norm among American families, such as *Duck Dynasty*?

    (rarely, if ever)        (occasionally)        (often)        (regularly)


9)  How often do you watch television shows in which the women rely on men to save them, such as *Vampire Diaries* or *Hart of Dixie* (and related shows)?

    (rarely, if ever)        (occasionally)        (often)        (regularly)


10) How often do you watch television shows that feature women who use their sexuality as a source of power and manipulation, such as *Scandal* and *Revenge*?

    (rarely, if ever)        (occasionally)        (often)        (regularly)

**Appendix C**

Data Results and Descriptive Statistics

| Population | *N* | *X* mean | Std. Deviation of *X* | *Y* mean | Std. Deviation of *Y* | *R* | Coefficient of Determination |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group A** | 74 | -6.31 | 6.35 | -1.12 | 6.57 | .416 | .173 |
| **Group B** | 45 | -4.24 | 8.54 | -1.73 | 5.45 | .154 | .023 |
| **Group C** | 119 | -5.53 | 7.29 | -1.35 | 6.15 | .292 | .085 |

# Appendix D

Percentages of Responses Toward Post-Feminism

| KEY -- A = Attitude / V = Viewership | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A vs. V | # Lower | % Lower | # Upper | % Upper | # Group | % Group |
| Leaning Pos | 9 | 12.16% | 6 | 13.33% | 15 | 12.61% |
| Leaning Neg | 41 | 55.41% | 22 | 48.89% | 63 | 52.94% |
| A-Pos V-Neg | 23 | 31.08% | 10 | 22.22% | 33 | 27.73% |
| A-Neg V-Pos | 1 | 1.35% | 7 | 15.56% | 8 | 6.72% |

**Appendix E**

<u>IRB Approval Letter</u>

**MARSHALL UNIVERSITY**
www.marshall.edu

**Office of Research Integrity**                                    FWA 00002704
Institutional Review Board
401 11th St., Suite 1300                                          IRB1 #00002205
Huntington, WV 25701                                              IRB2 #00003206

April 16, 2014

Chris Swindell, Ph.D.
School of Journalism and Mass Communication

RE: IRBNet ID# 593737-1
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Swindell:

| Protocol Title: | [593737-1] Examining the Theoretical Consequences of a Post-feminist Media Culture |
| --- | --- |

| Expiration Date: | April 16, 2015 | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Site Location: | MU | |
| Submission Type: | New Project | APPROVED |
| Review Type: | Exempt Review | |

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(2), the above study and informed consent were granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire April 16, 2015. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Jedidiah Bailey.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Generated on IRBNet

## Appendix F

### Curriculum Vitae

# Jedidiah N. Bailey

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EDUCATION** | **Shawnee State University** | **Portsmouth, OH** | December, 2010 |

*Bachelor of Arts in English/Humanities, GPA 3.73*
*Concentration in Communications with minor in British Literature*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Marshall University** | **Huntington, WV** | August, 2014 |

*Master of Arts in Journalism, GPA 4.00*      *(graduation in August 2014 pending thesis submission)*

**HONORS**

- Mary Elizabeth Schwartz Scholarship, 2010
- Shawnee State University Celebration of Scholarship Dean's Award for Best Essay, 2010
- Betty and Jim Hodgden Travel Grant Recipient (for student trip to Rwanda, Africa), 2009
- Shawnee State University Celebration of Scholarship Dean's Award for Best Essay, 2009
- Inductee of Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society, 2009
- Honors Scholarship, 2007-2009
- Community Common Scholarship, 2006

**EXPERIENCE**

**August 2013-**
**Present**

**Shawnee State University**
*Full-Time Temporary Instructor of English Composition (First-Year Writing)*
- Taught three sections of ENGL 1101 during Fall 2013 semester
- Taught three sections of ENGL 1105 during Spring 2014 semester
- Taught one section of ENGL 1105 during Summer 2014 semester

**August 2011-**
**May 2013**

**Marshall University**
*Graduate Teaching Assistant in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications (SOJMC)*
- Taught one section of JMC 102 (Information Gathering and Research) in Fall 2012
- T.A.—Advised and guided internship students to ensure they met satisfactory requirements for course credit
- Organized SOJMC Career Expo and United High School Media recruiting event in Spring 2013
- Team member in OutLoud Creative (the student-ran PR/Advertising agency at Marshall)

**August 2009 –**
**December 2010**

**Shawnee State University**
*Reading and Writing Center Tutor*
- Proofread student papers
- Helped students compose outlines for research papers
- Guided student research and referred students to librarians as needed

**Fall 2010**

**Shawnee State University**
*Student mentor for UGRAD-Pakistan Fellow Program*
- Served as university mentor for Pakistani exchange student
- Developed an organized strategic plan for tutoring student in compliance with IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board) guidelines
- Reported to and discussed progress of tutoring program with Rita Haider, director of SSU's Center for International Programs and Affairs
- Tutored student weekly in four specific study skill areas

**August 2009**       **Shawnee State University**
                      *Shawnee State University student representative during August 2009 trip to Rwanda, Africa*

**Spring 2009**       **Shawnee State University**
                      *Copy editor for the English and Humanities Department Newsletter*
                      - Composed and edited articles, including production design
                      - Collaborated with department chair, Darren Harris-Fain, to develop strategic communication plan
                      - Supervised student involvement and participation in newsletter

**Fall 2008**         **Shawnee State University**
                      *University Chronicle (Shawnee State University) paid staff writer/reporter*
                      - Composed two campus-related news articles on a weekly basis for publication in the student paper

**SKILLS**
                      - Exceptional teaching, tutoring and mentoring skills
                      - Strong written communication skills
                      - Proven organizational, managerial, and leadership skills
                      - Solid critical thinking skills