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## **Effects of Personal Relevance and Consensus Information on Feminist Self-Identification**

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**Effects of Personal Relevance and Consensus Information on Feminist Self-Identification**

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of Psychology

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

And

The Honors Program

of

Butler University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Mary Allison Stazinski

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### **Abstract**

Past research has identified several factors that contribute to the likelihood of a person self-identifying as a feminist. However, although prior work points to the importance of the perceived relevancy of the feminist movement and the public's consensus about it, previous research has not looked at these two factors specifically. Using an experimental methodological approach, the current study had participants read a news article about feminism that was either low or high in personal relevancy, followed by exposure to comments supposedly left by previous readers that suggested most others viewed feminism positively or negatively, after which participants reported to what extent they identify as a feminist. The results indicated that neither perceived relevance nor consensus information significantly affected feminist self-identification, although manipulation checks suggested that the independent variables were only partially successful in generating their intended effects. Exploratory analyses suggested that consensus information may have an effect on feminist self-identification for individuals possessing low levels of knowledge about the feminist movement. This study laid the groundwork for future research intended to identify the factors that promote and inhibit feminist self-identification.

## Introduction

As with many social movements, a large majority of the population supports the values promoted in feminism, but ironically most of that majority do not self-identify as a member of the feminist movement. This lack of correlation between feminist attitudes and a feminist identity has been studied extensively (McCabe, 2005; Eisele & Stake, 2008). For example, one study of female college students showed that the percentage who said that they supported most of the goals of the feminist movement was 75%, while the percent who self-identified as a feminist was only 11.4% (Liss et al., 2004). Researchers have proposed varying reasons for this disparity in attitudes versus identification. Two of the most prominent reasons are the negative connotations that come with the word “feminist” and the belief that feminism is no longer a necessary movement (Swirsky & Angelone, 2014; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010).

Prior research has examined the stereotypes that people hold about feminists. Some of the more intense words associated with feminists include “femi-nazis,” “man-haters,” and “bra burning crazies” (Swirsky & Angelone, 2014). Many of the unflattering stereotypes of feminists are related to physical attractiveness, sexual orientation, and radical behavior. However, even with the continuing existence of these negative stereotypes, research has demonstrated that most people tend to express neutral to positive views of feminists (Moradi et al., 2012; Ramsey et al., 2007). If this is true, then this discrepancy between feminist attitudes and feminist identification does not make sense. To explain this, researchers have posed that, although many people do not believe these negative stereotypes about feminists themselves, they think that others hold these beliefs. A study of undergraduate women showed that all participants in the study, both feminists and non-feminists alike, believed that other people see feminists in a more negative light than the participants themselves do. Ramsey et al. (2007) suggest that this may be due to the human tendency to more easily recognize biases in others, yet deny one’s own biases.

According to social identity theory, people are more likely to identify with a group if they think that the group can positively contribute to their self-concept (Williams & Wittig, 1997). Seemingly, to believe this, a person must initially view that group in a positive way and think that other people also view that group positively. Past research has supported this claim, demonstrating that having a positive valuation of feminists is an important predictor of feminist identification (Cowan & Masek, 1992; Houvouras & Carter, 2008; Williams & Wittig, 1997). Berryman-Fink and Verderber (1985) found that, although people perceived feminists in a generally neutral-to-positive sense, the characteristics that they attributed to feminists were typically traits that are often considered masculine in nature. Although not inherently negative, these traits may have a more negative connotation when associated with women (Williams & Wittig, 1997).

Although stereotypes themselves clearly play a role, what might matter most is not the stereotypes themselves, but how often and how recently people have been exposed to them. Past research has focused on the extent to which exposure to positive or negative stereotypes of feminists affects a person's willingness to self-identify as one. Roy et al. (2007) asked college women to read a paragraph containing positive stereotypes, negative stereotypes, or no stereotypes of feminists. Feminist attitudes and identification were subsequently measured, revealing that women who were exposed to positive stereotypes were twice as likely to identify as a feminist than those who were in the negative or control conditions. The similarity of results in the negative and control conditions indicated that the negative stereotype condition may reflect people's baseline feelings towards feminism (Roy et al., 2007).

Past research has demonstrated the impact that exposure to positive or negative stereotypes of feminists has on feminist identification as well as the importance of one's valuation of feminism on identification. The present study seeks to expand on this idea, looking

at how the exposure to positive or negative consensus opinions regarding feminism impacts feminist identification.

Another important factor that past research has explored as a possible deterrent to feminist identification is perceived relevance or the belief that feminism is no longer a necessary cause. Over time, there has been a shift away from “traditional” gender roles, allowing women to feel more empowered. The accomplishments of the initial waves of the feminist movement and the appearance of equality may cause people to believe that feminism is obsolete, making them blind to continued gender discrimination (Swirsky & Angelone, 2014). Downing and Roush formulated a model of feminist identity development consisting of 5 stages. The first stage is a passive acceptance of women’s traditional roles. Next, there is a period of revelation when discrimination is recognized, and men are subsequently viewed less favorably. This stage can arise from a personal experience of discrimination or general consciousness-raising regarding its existence. Following this is the embeddedness-emanation stage during which there is increased interactions with select women and caution taken in interactions with men. The fourth stage is synthesis, when the feminist identity actually develops. The fifth and final stage is marked by an active commitment towards feminism (Downing & Roush, 1985; Liss & Erchull, 2010; William & Wittig, 1997).

Looking at this model, the belief that feminism is relevant would become important in stage 2—the period of revelation. The belief that feminist issues are relevant to oneself can stem from a multitude of areas, including the consciousness-raising and personal experience that Downing and Roush (1985) identify. There are several factors that have been studied and shown to be predictors of feminist self-identification. These include having been exposed to feminists and feminist ideas in one’s personal life (Houvouras & Carter, 2008; Nelson et al., 2008; Williams and Wittig, 1997). Women who identify as feminists have been shown to be more

likely than non-identifiers to have taken a women's studies course, which exposed them to feminist ideologies, and to have grown up in families that promoted pro-equality attitudes (Aronson, 2003). Women who recognized discrimination in their own lives were also found to be more supportive of the women's movement as well as more aware of gender inequality in general (Nelson et al., 2008; Williams & Wittig, 1997) These factors together seem to all point to an increased belief that feminism is still a relevant issue. The present study is looking to study relevancy specifically in predicting feminist identification.

The importance of this research lies in the findings that those who self-identify as a feminist are more likely to both believe in and participate in collective action (Nelson et al., 2008). The awareness of gender discrimination that was previously discussed as a factor in developing a feminist identity can also be beneficial when experiencing discrimination oneself. Instead of blaming oneself for the negative experience, the blame is shifted to sexism and the social biases that exist against one's group as a whole. Although experiencing discrimination of any kind still remains harmful, believing that you are not personally at fault for it can mitigate the harm it may cause your psychological well-being (Fitz et al., 2012).

Research has routinely shown that exposure to positive stereotypes increases likelihood of self-identification, whereas the belief that other people hold negative stereotypes dissuades people from identifying. Thus, the present study focuses on how exposure to consensus information showing that most people hold positive views versus negative views of feminism affects people's willingness to identify as a feminist. Relevance has also been shown to be an influential factor in feminist identification. Thus, this study also focuses on how manipulating the perceived relevance of the feminist movement affects feminist identification.

Most of the previous research on this topic focuses on individual factors that may influence feminist self-identification. However, few implicate relevancy and public consensus



specifically. This study examined how different levels of relevancy (high and low) interact with public consensus opinions (positive and negative) to affect feminist self-identification. Based on the prior work summarized previously, the current investigation attempted to test the following hypotheses.

*H1:* Participants who perceive the feminist movement to be more relevant to their lives will be more likely to self-identify as a feminist than those who perceive the feminist movement to be less relevant to their lives.

*H2:* Participants who perceive there to be a positive consensus in support of feminism will be more likely to self-identify as a feminist than those who perceive a negative consensus

Moreover, because self-identification is a complex process, factors like perceived relevance and consensus likely interact with each other, as suggested by past work (e.g., Roy et al., 2007). Thus, I predicted that positive consensus information will amplify the impact of relevance on feminist identification.

*H3:* Those who perceive feminism to be relevant to their lives and are also exposed to positive consensus comments will show the strongest feminist self-identification.

## **Method**

### *Overview*

For this online experiment, participants were asked to read an article about feminism. Depending on the condition, the article addressed a feminist topic either low or high in relevancy to modern college students (e.g., history of feminist movement vs. the gender wage gap) followed by comments from supposed ‘previous readers’ that indicated either a positive or

negative consensus toward feminism. After reading the article and comments, participants completed a short survey assessing their level of feminist identification along with several manipulation checks and other variables.

### *Participants*

Fifty-four undergraduate college students at Butler University participated in the present study. About 96% self-identified as White, 1.5% as Asian American/Pacific Islander, and about 1.5% as other. Additionally, 89% identified as female and 11% identified as male. The participants ranged from 18-22 years in age. The political orientation of the participants leaned towards liberal, with 71% reporting they were at least somewhat liberal, and about 75% reported they were at least somewhat familiar with feminist ideology. Participants were recruited from psychology courses via SONA, which is an online system used to manage the subject pool maintained by Butler University's Department of Psychology. These participants were offered extra credit for their participation in the study. Other subjects who voluntarily participated were recruited through various organizations at Butler University and were not offered compensation for their participation.

### *Design*

This study used a 2 (Relevancy of Article: Low vs. High) x 2 (Consensus: Positive vs. Negative) between-participants experimental design. There were four conditions labeled: (1) high relevancy/positive consensus, (2) high relevancy/negative consensus, (3) low relevancy/positive consensus, (4) low relevancy/negative consensus. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Participants assigned to the high relevancy condition read an article that contained information about the current gender wage gap (see Appendix A). Participants in the low relevancy condition read an article that contained information about the

Second Wave of feminism (see Appendix B). For those in the positive consensus condition, the article was followed by 20 “public reader” comments (see Appendix C), 15 of which were supportive of the feminist movement and 5 of which were neutral towards feminism. In the negative consensus condition, there were 20 comments (see Appendix D) following the article, 15 of which expressed negative views towards feminism and 5 of which were neutral. The comments, which were generated by the experimenter to manipulate perceived consensus, were formatted in a manner similar to the typical comments sections that often follow online articles.

### *Procedure*

Participants were asked to read an article concerning women’s issues and to complete a short follow-up questionnaire. IRB approval was received prior to distribution of the survey. Participants were given a link that led to them to an informed consent statement informing them of the purpose of the study, the minimal risks involved, and of their ability to terminate their participation at any time. Then participants were instructed to read a news article followed by comments concerning the article. With four possible conditions, which article and comments they had were dependent upon the condition to which they were randomly assigned. After reading the materials, participants were instructed to complete a survey containing the measures described below.

### *Demographics*

Participants completed several demographic items. These measures included gender identification, race/ethnicity, age, familiarity with the feminist movement, and political orientation. Familiarity with the feminist movement was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from not knowledgeable at all to extremely knowledgeable. Political orientation was assessed on a 7-point scale ranging from very liberal to very conservative.

### *Feminist identification*

Three survey questions were used to measure the primary dependent variable, feminist identification. The first measure asked participants “Do you consider yourself a feminist?” with yes or no options. The other two feminist identification measures allowed participants to indicate the strength of their position on a continuum as a self-identified feminist. One asked participants to indicate on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from completely disagree to completely agree how much they agree with the statement “I consider myself a feminist.” The final measure on this topic was a question from Morgan (1996) that was adapted for use by Charter (2015) to measure feminist self-identification. This question asked, “To what extent do you consider yourself a feminist?” with seven answer choices ranging from “I am a committed feminist currently active in the Women’s Movement” to “I do not consider myself a feminist at all and believe that feminists are harmful to family life and undermine relations between men and women”.

### *Manipulation Checks*

Several items were included to measure if the manipulation of the independent variables had the intended effects. Perceived relevance of the article was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from not at all relevant to extremely relevant. To measure whether the consensus manipulation worked, participants were asked if they read the comments following the article and what they perceived the commenter’s views of feminism to be on a 5-point scale ranging from very negative to very positive. A separate measure asked participants if the article made them feel certain emotions (e.g., bored, inspired, and angry), which were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from not at all to very much. How interesting participants found the article was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from not interesting at all to extremely interesting. These measures were included to control for possible confounds if the two articles were perceived to

differ in ways other than relevance. Participants were also asked what they thought the purpose of the study was.

## Results

It was predicted that participants would be more likely to self-identify as a feminist when exposed to positive consensus views of feminism and when exposed to feminist issues that were relevant to their lives. A significant interaction was also predicted, such that exposure to positive consensus views would amplify the effect of relevance.

A 2x2 between-participants ANOVA was conducted to analyze the impact of consensus and relevance on feminist self-identification. To create an overall index of feminist self-identification, the scores from each of the three items used to assess this construct were first standardized using z-score transformations. The resulting transformed scores were then averaged together to create an overall index of feminist self-identification for each participant. The three individual measures were all intercorrelated ( $r$ 's > .65), and the resulting index exhibited a high degree of internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .89). The index was scaled such that *lower* scores indicate greater feminist self-identification.

Unfortunately, the findings did not support the hypotheses. Contrary to predictions, the reports of feminist identification were highest in the negative consensus, high relevance condition ( $M = -.17, SD = .83$ ). Recall that lower scores indicate higher feminist identification. Feminist identification was lowest in the negative consensus, low relevance condition ( $M = .21, SD = 1.02$ ). In the positive consensus, low relevance condition ( $M = .09, SD = .92$ ), and positive consensus, high relevance condition ( $M = -.04, SD = .97$ ), the identification scores were similar to each other and in-between the other two conditions. Importantly, no significant main effects were found for relevance,  $F(1, 50) = .986, p = .326$ , or for consensus,  $F(1, 50) = .001, p = .978$ .

Moreover, the interaction between relevance and consensus was not significant,  $F(1, 50) = .231$ ,  $p = .633$ .

In follow-up correlational analyses and consistent with prior work, several variables did predict feminist self-identification. Knowledge of feminism,  $r(52) = .521$ ,  $p < .001$ , and liberal political orientation,  $r(52) = .640$ ,  $p < .001$ , were significantly positively correlated with feminist identification, suggesting that the index of feminist self-identification used in the current study was functioning in a valid manner. Additionally, those who found the articles more relevant,  $r(52) = -.144$ ,  $p = .299$ , and interesting,  $r(52) = .337$ ,  $p = .014$ , were also more likely to self-identify as a feminist to a greater extent.

One reason the experiment may have failed to produce results supporting the study hypotheses was because the independent variables did not produce the intended effects. However, manipulation checks showed that the consensus manipulation affected perceptions,  $F(1, 52) = 105.69$ ,  $p < .001$ . When asked to characterize the comments, participants perceived the comments to indicate more positive support for feminism in the positive consensus condition ( $M = 1.76$ ,  $SD = 1.012$ ) compared to the negative consensus ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = .826$ ). Again, lower numbers indicate greater support for feminism.

Unfortunately, the relevance manipulation check showed that participants in the high relevance condition ( $M = 2.10$ ,  $SD = 1.047$ ) and the low relevance conditions ( $M = 2.28$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) did not differ in how relevant they perceived their respective articles to be,  $F(1, 52) = .521$ ,  $p = .473$ . This finding may be due to the fact that the majority of participants were female, liberal Psychology majors and, in all likelihood, already identified as feminists. For such a group, most topics concerning feminism are probably perceived as at least somewhat relevant.

Because most participants likely already identified as feminist, the experimental manipulations probably had reduced impact. As indicated above, the relevance manipulation completely failed. To explore how pre-existing levels of feminism may have affected the results, the following exploratory analysis was performed. A 2x2 between-participants ANOVA was conducted to analyze the impact of pre-existing knowledge about feminist ideology (high or low) and consensus (positive or negative) on feminist identification. Regarding the former quasi-independent variable, a median split was performed to categorize participants as high or low on pre-existing knowledge of feminist ideology, with the assumption that those with high levels of knowledge probably identify as feminist. Not surprisingly, the ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for knowledge,  $F(1, 51) = 8.079, p = .007$ , with high knowledge participants reporting higher feminist self-identification. The effect for consensus was again not significant,  $F(1, 51) = .482, p = .491$ , and neither was the interaction,  $F(1, 51) = .468, p = .497$ . However, visual inspection of the cell means suggest that while consensus information had no impact on high-knowledge participants, consensus may have been having an effect on low-knowledge participants. Low-knowledge participants in the negative consensus condition ( $M = .85, SD = .60$ ) reported lower levels of feminist self-identification compared to those in the positive consensus condition ( $M = .45, SD = .88$ ), although this trend must be interpreted with great caution given that the interaction was not significant.

## Discussion

Overall, the data did not provide support for the hypotheses, as there were no significant main effects or interaction. Many of the participants were very knowledgeable of feminism and, in all likelihood, identified as feminists to begin with, which meant the independent variables would have had to have been very powerful to shift participants' self-views. This could explain

why the relevance manipulation did not work, because many of the participants still saw the issues of the second wave feminist movement as relevant to their lives. The high levels of pre-existing feminism also likely explain why the consensus manipulation failed to produce any effects. Although participants did perceive differences between the positive consensus comments and negative consensus comments, that difference failed to have an effect. Again, given that most participants probably possessed relatively strong feminist self-views, it is not surprising the consensus manipulation failed to change those views. Although the specific predictions were not supported, the correlational analyses did replicate prior work, demonstrating that having more knowledge about feminism and being politically liberal predict feminist identification.

Also of note, the exploratory analysis suggested that those who reported being less knowledgeable about feminism were more heavily influenced by exposure to consensus comments than those who were more knowledgeable about feminism. In the less knowledgeable group, the difference in feminist self-identification between the positive and negative consensus groups approached half a standard deviation in size, although the low number of participants in each of those groups provided minimal levels of power to detect a difference. This suggests that running this experiment again with a larger sample size might well reveal meaningful effects, particularly if the sample included individuals who varied more in terms of level of pre-existing feminist self-identification.

Feminism may indeed seem an irrelevant issue to some, but sexism remains a powerful force in the United States and most of the rest of the world, and its existence has many negative effects on women and girls. Issues such as poverty, violence, and employment discrimination are contemporary gender disproportionate issues that demonstrate why feminism is still a necessary movement today (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Research has shown that feminist identification,



specifically, can engender beneficial effects that counteract inequalities and discrimination. Self-identified feminists have shown greater levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem, greater leadership aspirations, and improved coping skills in regard to sexism when compared to those who do not identify as feminist (Eisele & Stake, 2008; Leicht et al., 2017; Moradi et al., 2012).

Although holding feminist beliefs is valuable, those who simply believe in these values yet choose not to identify as a feminist tend to be more similar to non-feminists than to feminists in terms of upholding discriminatory ideologies such as meritocracy, social hierarchy, social norms, and sexist attitudes (Moradi et al., 2012; Swirsky & Angelone, 2014). Highly identified feminists have also shown to be more adept at resisting gender stereotypes when they are present (Leicht et al., 2017; Moradi et al., 2012), as feminism encourages women to challenge negative cultural messages they receive. For example, self-identified feminists, in rejecting the cultural messages they encounter regarding how they are supposed to look, tend to view their body in terms of how well it is functioning as opposed to how it appears physically (Eisele & Stake, 2008). The ideals of the female body and the objectification of women take a large psychological toll on women and girls (Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Feminist identification has been shown to mitigate this effect by fostering the acknowledgment of discrimination, the denial of cultural messages, and the subsequent empowerment that comes from denying social norms. It is important to understand what factors may be influencing feminist identification in order to reap the substantial benefits that follow from that identification.

### *Limitations & Future Directions*

There are several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results of this study. The participants voluntarily completed the study and were not randomly selected from a population. They were all students at a mid-sized, private Midwest university, and the

participants consisted of mostly white females, which would have limited the generalizability of the results, had there been any significant findings. The survey was not administered in a controlled setting and there is a possibility that participants did not read the article and comments carefully, although the majority of the participants reported that they had indeed read all of the comments. With some of the questions, there may also have been issues with social desirability. Even though participants were told their responses would remain anonymous, some people may still have felt reluctant to express strong beliefs about self-identifying or not self-identifying as a feminist. Some participants were also able to deduce the purpose of the study, which may have influenced their responses. The current study also did not include control conditions that might have facilitated the interpretation of significant findings. For example, because only positive and negative consensus conditions were utilized, if significant differences had been found in terms of feminist self-identification, there would be no way to determine whether the difference was being driven by the impact of the positive consensus information or by the negative consensus information or, potentially, by both.

Of particular note, there were only 54 participants in this study, which resulted in lower-than-expected power. It is possible that the results would have provided significant support for the study's hypotheses had the investigation included more participants. Unfortunately, complications due to COVID-19 interfered with the anticipated timeline of the study and curtailed recruitment efforts.

Despite the null findings of the current study, perceived relevance and public consensus should not yet be ruled out as major factors contributing to feminist self-identification. Prior research has suggested they both play a critical role, and hints of that role were evident in the current investigation. Replicating the current study using a larger, more diverse sample in the

future will provide a reasonable test of whether perceived relevance and consensus significantly affect feminist self-identification.

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## Appendix A

### High Relevance Article

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## Gender pay gap isn't closing - and signs point to a divide wider ahead

Sep 15<sup>th</sup> 2020

*Guest Editorial by the American Association of University Women*

AAUW CEO Kimberly Churches issued the following statement in response to figures released by the U.S. Census Bureau:

“Another year, another frustrating statistic for American women and their families: The wage gap between men and women once again has barely budged. As unfathomable as it seems, numbers don’t lie: Women still are paid just 82 cents for every dollar paid to a man. Black women are paid just 63 cents and Latinas 55 cents compared to what white men earn.

“These numbers reflect a very slight narrowing over last year’s numbers: In 2018, on average women earned 81.6 cents for every dollar paid to men, compared to 82.3 cents in 2019; Black women were paid 62% of white, non-Hispanic men’s wages in 2018, compared to 63% in 2019; and Latinas made 54% of white, non-Hispanic men’s wages in 2018 compared to 55% in 2019. Those changes reflect a hint of movement, but hardly enough to make a difference in our bank accounts. And strikingly, the pay gap actually widened for Asian women, who were paid 89% of white, non-Hispanic men’s wages in 2018, compared to 87% in 2019.

“If that’s not bad enough, the situation will get even worse: These new figures reflect wages from 2018 to 2019, and there’s every indication that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic fallout could actually widen the gap in 2020. Women have been disproportionately affected by furloughs and unemployment during the pandemic, largely because so many hold jobs in the industries that have shrunk amidst the pandemic. Women of color have been especially hard hit, confronting the cascading effects of both economic and health insecurity.

“What’s more, the challenges of caretaking – exacerbated by virtual schooling, closed day care centers and isolated seniors – have taken a significant toll on women’s careers. With women still shouldering the bulk of domestic responsibilities, many have no other option but to reduce their work hours, put off advancement opportunities or quit their jobs altogether. That reality will compound the difficulties of achieving pay equity any time soon.

“But we are not giving up in our battle to demand the equitable wages that most Americans agree women deserve. In fact, the stagnant numbers – and the glaring

unfairness of it all – inspire us to work even harder to ensure economic security for women and their families.

“AAUW will continue to advocate for laws and policies aimed at increasing [salary transparency](#), which has been shown to help equalize pay. We will work to increase the number of states, localities and private employers that [ban the use of salary history](#) to set wages, and we will ramp up our efforts to pass the federal [Paycheck Fairness Act](#) and strengthen state laws around the country. We will continue to partner with American employers to reimagine their workplace models, which are still based on an outdated notion of how families live and work. And we will double down on our efforts to ensure all workers have access to [paid sick and caregiving leave](#) as well as safe, reliable and affordable child care.

“The events of 2020 have made it painfully obvious that we need to accelerate our work on behalf of American women, particularly women of color. We need to seize this moment to forge ahead in the movement for equity. We cannot and will not grow complacent about a wage gap that is robbing American women and their families of the economic security they deserve.”

## Appendix B

### Low Relevance Article

# A Brief Summary of the Second Wave of Feminism

By Tara Anand -April 25, 2018 20

The Second Wave of feminism is usually demarcated from the 1960s to the late 1980s. It was a reaction to women returning to their roles as housewives and mothers after the end of the Second World War. The men that had to leave the workforce to join the defence forces had returned and women were fired from their positions and replaced by men.

38 percent of American women who worked in the 1960s were largely limited to jobs as teachers, nurses or secretaries. Women were expected to quietly resume their lives as loyal and subjugated wives. Housewives were estimated to spend an average of 55 hours a week on domestic chores. However, after having worked and been independent of male dominance during the war, women didn't want to resume these roles and this brought about the Second Wave of feminism.

While the First Wave was largely concerned with the suffragette struggle for the vote, the Second Wave focused more on both public and private injustices. This movement was triggered by the publishing of Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, a renowned feminist text credited for daring to break social conventions regarding the portrayal of women. This text was considered ground-breaking and became a landmark in the history of feminism. *The Feminine Mystique* discussed "the problem that has no name": the general unhappiness of American women in the 1960s and 70s.

Friedan highlights the fault of the advertising industry and education system in restricting women to the household and menial tasks that result in a loss of identity and individuality. This book reached women all over the United States of America who were touched by it. Thousands of white middle-class women were thus drawn to the feminist cause, marking the start of the Second Wave of feminism.

Women became more involved in protests and advocacy for equality by creating local, state and federal feminist organizations. Legislation like the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were significant measures taken to achieve greater equality for the sexes. Supreme Court rulings like *Griswold v. Connecticut* and *Roe v. Wade* also furthered the feminist cause.

In 1966, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was created, with Friedan named the first President. The NOW, under Friedan, tried to enforce more work opportunities for women but there was fierce opposition to this demand. The opposition argued that at that time, male



African Americans, who were heavily discriminated against by the white population were in greater need of employment than middle-class white women. As a result, Friedan stepped down from the presidency in 1969.

The legal victories of the movement post-NOW creation were extensive. A 1967 Executive Order gave full affirmative action rights to women. A 1968 order made sex-segregated help wanted ads for employment illegal, thus drastically decreasing female exclusion from the workforce.

The outlaw of marital rape by all states in 1993 and the legalization of no-fault divorce greatly reduced the dependence of wives on their husbands and gave them the tools to live healthier lives. In 1975, a law requiring military academies to admit women was passed and the image of women as simply “domestic goddesses” was altered.

As a whole, the Second Wave can be characterized by a general feeling of solidarity among women fighting for equality. It also saw the creation of several types of feminism. Radical feminism was prevalent, which involved the complete elimination of male supremacy and challenging of all gender roles.

## Appendix C

### Sample of Positive Consensus Comments

#### Comments 20

Sort by: Newest

**M** **Mandy**  
Second-wave feminism actually improved the family and really opened up an enormous pool of labor.  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)  
1 REPLY

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**H** **Hellen**  
Exactly! Now we have households where both the husband and wife can contribute their income instead of just the man.  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)

---

**J** **Jared**  
Women should have the ability to pursue a career if they want to. Their children will be fine at home.  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)

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**JT** **Jennifer T.**  
Betty Friedan was in that show Mrs. America! Didn't know how much of an impact she actually had on all this.  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)

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**K** **KaylaFitz**  
Feminism is such a necessary movement. It was created by strong women and we need to continue to fight for it.  
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**MJ** **Marissa J.**  
Feminists just want equality, not domination.  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)

## Appendix D

### Sample of Negative Consensus Comments

- 
- C Christoph23**  
 Wonder what the leaders of the second wave movement would say about the state of the world today.  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)
- 
- KL Keith L.**  
 Patriarchy is a myth women created to feel oPpRrEessed  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)
- 
- S SheilaOake7**  
 They barely teach these parts of history in school nowadays  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)
- 
- TG Tamara G.**  
 Feminism used to be the most righteous of fights... But these days it feels like they secretly hate guys.  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)
- 
- H Hannah456**  
 God what a terrible influence Steinem proved to be  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)
- 
- K KelsSmit**  
 So many negative social effects of pushing women to work. Less families, less time to spend with children.  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)  
 1 REPLY
- 
- S Staceyh17**  
 Agreed. Not only did we fail to fix wealth inequality, we ruined the family unit by forcing men and women to both be breadwinners.  
[Reply](#) [Share](#) [Flag](#)
-