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Symposium Abstracts

Friday, October 25, 2013
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Betty Friedan, in her 1963 bestseller, *The Feminine Mystique*, examined the role of various institutions in keeping women in a subservient position. The text helped kick off 1960s feminism in the United States. Fifty years later as feminism enters into the fourth wave, the time is ripe to study its lasting impact on society. This essay examines representations of the Feminine Mystique in popular culture. Specifically, it investigates pins posted to Pinterest in 2013.

While *The Feminine Mystique* is unquestionably a noteworthy text that helped stimulate the feminist movement, very few communications research articles have addressed the book. A search in Communication & Mass Media Complete revealed only five scholarly articles on the topic. Of these articles, only one discusses the 50th anniversary of *The Feminine Mystique*, and none discuss new media portrayals of the book.

Building on these gaps in the literature, research questions were: (1) what themes are present in Pinterest pins about *The Feminist Mystique*? (2) what content is linked to Pinterest pins containing Feminist Mystique in the title?

The artifacts for analysis consisted of a pool of 100 Pinterest pins found by searching for the keywords “Betty Friedan and Feminine Mystique” in October of 2013. Pins are visual bookmarks stored on a user’s Pinterest account that link to outside content. Pinterest is one of the newer social networking sites that launched in beta mode in March 2010. The invite-only visual bookmarking site is exclusive, yet by June 2012, according to Google DoubleClick, Pinterest was up to 31 million unique visitors per month (Chang, 2012).

Preliminary findings indicate Pinterest pins containing the term “Feminine Mystique” link to content such as YouTube videos, products and websites. For instance, one such pin spotlights *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins’ debate on the strengths and weaknesses of the ageless book. Pinterest pins also tout products ranging from art to high fashion to the book itself. For instance, an NPR blog entry highlighted in a pin focuses on an interview with Hanna Rosin, author of *The End of Men* (Neary, 2013). Rosin states that she was surprised by Friedan’s anger as she systematically laid out the case against a male-dominated society that was determined to keep women in their place. She adds that *The Feminine Mystique* is still relevant especially when it comes to society’s “understanding of women and domesticity.” Another pin links to a blog post titled, “4 Big Problems with *The Feminine Mystique*,” featured in *The Atlantic*. The author Ashley Fetters explores what she calls several “grains of salt” that deserve consideration in any discussion of the 50-year-old book’s legacy (Fetters, 2013). The post asserts that *The Feminist Mystique* ignored the black and lower income women of the 20th century. It also discusses the positive achievements that women have made in the last 50 years.

This exploratory study reveals *The Feminine Mystique* remains an integral part of popular culture. Study findings illustrate the significant impact the text has had on society. The text continues to shape women’s lives in the 21st Century. Pins discuss and critique feminism, commemorate the five decades following the publishing of *The Feminine Mystique* and keep alive the valuable debate on important women’s issues.
The Feminine Mystique & Society

“The Mystique of TRAP Laws”
Dr. Leslie A. Hahner
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In 1963, Betty Friedan diagnosed “the problem that has no name,” revealing how women were disaffected by limited roles and choices. For her, the ideology of the housewife circumscribed women’s vocations and resulted in a series of medical and cultural pathologies. The fiftieth anniversary of *The Feminine Mystique* offers contemporary audiences the opportunity to reflect on the choices and possibilities available to today’s women. Significantly, one of the ways that the ideology of the feminine mystique manifests in the present is through political guile. Put simply, today’s women are promised legal avenues for betterment, yet these pathways are resolutely designed to curtail women’s opportunities and choices.

This presentation attends to the way women are positioned as political pawns in TRAP laws—Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers. These state-based regulations are enacted on the claim that they better women’s health care. Advocates insist that these laws improve the safety standards of women’s health clinics and facilitate informed consent. Yet, effectively, the goal of TRAP laws is to reduce the number of women seeking abortions and to close as many abortion-providing clinics as possible.

Importantly, the underlying assumptions of these laws are predicated on aspects of the feminine mystique that Friedan noted. First, women are understood as unable or unwilling to make good choices when it comes to their reproductive lives. Friedan noted in 1963 that US culture had “erected barrier after barrier…to women’s own acceptance of maturity” (296). In this instance, regulation is posited as a corrective to women’s pathological immaturity: the authority of the state guides women by protecting them from the wrong choices. Second, legislators, not women, are the beneficiaries of these regulations. Politicians advertise TRAP laws as capable of reducing the number of abortions. The danger in buying into this unsubstantiated argument—especially for pro-life advocates—is that TRAP laws in no way reduce the number of abortions. One of Friedan’s more prescient arguments in *The Feminine Mystique* was that the mirage of the happy housewife persisted not simply because of cultural mores but because corporations profited from her buying power. As this presentation will suggest, TRAP laws benefit politicians seeking votes while failing to advance women’s health.

Keynote Lecture

“Beyond *The Feminine Mystique*”
Dr. Angela Barron McBride
Distinguished Professor/University Dean Emeritus
Indiana University School of Nursing

This presentation begins with an overview of what *The Feminine Mystique* accomplished, then proceeds to discuss how what Friedan set in motion shaped the life course of individuals and societal thinking, for example, giving birth to women’s studies, an appreciation of adult development, and new models of leadership. The presentation ends by reflecting on the unfinished business of the social movement she set in motion.
The Feminine Mystique & Education

“Before The Feminine Mystique: The Educational Philosophies of Early Women’s Colleges”
Dr. Andrea L. Turpin
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Betty Friedan graduated Smith College in 1942. Fifteen years later she prepared a survey for her classmates on the event of their upcoming reunion. Her goal: to disprove the belief that a college education made women unhappy. An overwhelming number of respondents reported regretting not having planned to put their education to work beyond the home. Friedan concluded that dissatisfaction sprang not from education itself, but from the failure to use it in a vocation besides homemaking. It was this survey that inspired and informed her 1963 best-seller The Feminine Mystique.

As graduates of a women’s college, Friedan and her classmates stood in a long line of women who chose to pursue higher education in that setting. Although state universities in the West opened to women as well as men shortly after the Civil War, long-standing Eastern colleges did not. In the East, therefore, the women’s college became the dominant model of higher education for women. The earliest prominent women’s college, Vassar, opened in 1865, followed a decade later by Wellesley and Friedan’s alma mater Smith. Radcliffe opened in 1879 and Bryn Mawr in 1884. Throughout their early years, these colleges earnestly sought to articulate a vision of how their graduates could best use their education to make a meaningful contribution to society.

This paper analyzes how leaders of these early women’s colleges articulated different versions of this vision. It will focus on the first decades of women’s higher education, 1865-1920, to underscore the historical depth of the problem to which Friedan called attention: women and men received the same education, but women had fewer opportunities open to them after graduation. Christianity—of various types—still permeated American higher education during these years, and the paper argues that different theological assumptions underlay different responses to this problem.

Some educators did not push graduates toward any particular life path because they believed God should be the one to direct each individual woman. Others believed a college education gave women a moral responsibility to pursue a profession. Still others specified women best served God beyond the home in fields such as social work where their unique strengths were of greatest use.

In his essay “Preface on the Prospects of Christianity,” Irish playwright, critic, and political activist George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) roundly criticizes the Apostle Paul. In addition to contending that Paul “does nothing that Jesus would have done and says nothing that Jesus would have said,” Shaw adjudges Paul as “the eternal enemy of Woman.”

The purpose of my presentation is to raise and to respond to the following question: What has given rise to this not uncommon perception? Arguably, the primary reason that some people perceive Paul to be chauvinistic, if not misogynistic, is due to certain passages found in Pauline Letters regarding women/wives and their interpretation and appropriation over the sweep of Christian history.

In this short paper, I will identify and treat such troubling texts in Paul, not least 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. I will also note, however, a number of passages where Paul affirms women/wives in marriage and ministry. The upshot of this study will be the challenging of Shaw’s facile assumption that Paul is “the eternal enemy of Woman.”

REFERENCES


2 For a recent, succinct survey of feminist readings of Paul, see Kathy Ehrensperger, That We May Be Mutually Encouraged: Feminism and the New Perspective in Pauline Studies (New York/London: T & T Clark, 2004), 39-42.
The Feminine Mystique & Faith

“The Differential Effects of Protestant Fundamentalism on Female and Male Environmental Cooperation”

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A number of recent studies indicate that Protestant fundamentalism is associated with lower levels of generalized trust. In this paper, we ask: What are the implications of fundamentalists’ lower trust levels? We focus specifically on cooperative decisions that benefit the greater good. Past research finds that trust promotes cooperation, but more recent work suggests that trust matters more for women than men in making decisions about cooperation. We theorize that because fundamentalism undermines trust, and women’s but not men’s cooperation is predicated on trust, fundamentalism should negatively impact cooperation for women, but not men. That is, we suggest an interaction between gender and fundamentalism on cooperation. We test the arguments in the context of environmental social dilemmas including decisions about recycling, water and energy consumption, and political participation using data from the 2010 General Social Survey. Findings support our predictions and suggest that fundamentalism more acutely undermines cooperation for women versus men.

“After The Feminine Mystique: Redefining Women of Color in Higher Education”

Dr. Elizabeth D. Palacios
Dean for Student Development
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Fifty years ago, Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique demystified the notion of the “Happy Housewife Heroin” and dismantled the American construct of the “fulfilled” White, middle-class, college-educated housewife and mother. American culture had built an expectation that everything a woman pursued should lead to finding the perfect husband to please. This included going to college in order to be able to converse intelligently with her future husband, which, by the way was an excellent place to find a prospective mate.

Female college students in the 1960’s were largely comprised of middle- to upper-class, White women. Many of the colleges emphasized knowledge and skills that would enhance their marketability as prospective wives for intelligent and well-established men who would be able to provide comfortable lives for them. Women who attended college tended to pursue female-oriented occupations such as teaching, social work, nursing, etc.

Yet, there remained colleges and universities who had not opened their doors to women and were unapologetically male centered. Males dominated college campuses and flourished in a structure designed for them. Today, women outnumber men on college campuses. Females have surpassed males in earning bachelors’ and graduate degrees (Ph.D. included). Nonetheless, women and minorities are still underrepresented in the STEM majors, and those females who do major in STEM areas are less likely to pursue jobs in those areas after college graduation. Women continue to earn less than their male counterparts at 82 cents for every dollar men earn.

As female enrollment was gradually growing in American colleges, minorities were still banned from attending many of the mainstream institutions of higher education. It would be in the mid- to late-sixties that the Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) decision would be enforced in some of the more resistant states where legal obstacles had been put into place. Although desegregation was mandated and implemented, there still remained disparities in education among women and minorities. That holds true today.

There has been a steady increase in minority enrollment, but adversity and challenges continue to threaten college success. Cultural expectations continue to define female roles where education is not a priority. Many young women still have to combat parental views that women should live at home until married, college might conflict with finding a viable husband and having children, or education is for the sons, not the daughters. After 50 years of celebrating the revolutionary work of Betty Friedan, there still remain barriers to remove, paradigms to change, and educational access to champion.
The Feminine Mystique & Work

“Women and Work: Managing the Challenges We Internalize”
Dr. Hope Koch
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Women have made tremendous strides in the professions. More women than ever graduate from college and enter challenging fields like business, technology, medicine, and law. In the U.S., women earn 57% of undergraduate degrees and 62% of master's degrees [U.S. Department of Education, 2012]. Nearly half of medical and law school graduates are women [Mitchell, 2012]. Despite these positive statistics, why have women in senior leadership positions declined [Sandberg and Scovell, 2013]? Why do women avoid stretch assignments and instead choose jobs that match our skill sets, or worse yet, opt-out of professional life in lieu of full-time motherhood, part-time work or volunteer work [Sandberg and Scovell, 2013]? This presentation explores the challenges today's women internalize and provides guidance to help us manage them. Our internal challenges include risk aversion, feeling we are a fake, self-deprecating behavior and unrealistic expectations [Bronson and Merryman, 2013, Sandberg and Scovell, 2013]. Women's risk aversion is evident in the jobs our job choices. Whereas our male counterparts will apply for assignments if there is any chance they can do it, women apply for assignments that we know we can do. When women seize a great job with great pay, we feel we are a fake and resort to self-deprecating behavior and setting unrealistic expectations for ourselves. We self-deprecate by not taking credit for our accomplishments and not billing for all the hours we work. Unrealistically, we try and achieve work-life balance, by comparing ourselves to male colleagues and stay at home mothers. The expectations for both have risen. Today's married middle-income parents work 8.5 more hours per week than in 1979 [Economic Policy Institute, 2012], whereas today's stay at home mom's now dedicate 17 hours each week to their children, a phenomenon called intensive mothering [Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie, 2006].

Trying to meet such unrealistic expectations has devastating effects, with women commonly accepting work assignments that allow us meet our personal obligations or leaving the workforce entirely [Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005]. This presentation will discuss some strategies for managing our challenges such as (1) how to temper our self-defense behavior, (2) outsourcing parts of our personal life and (3) trying to make the equality strides in the home that we've made in the workplace.

REFERENCES

“Work and Family: Finding Your Own Balance”
Dr. Emily M. Hunter
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In the workplace, women have made great strides since The Feminine Mystique was penned in 1963, but today women face new challenges. Rather than barriers to entering the workforce or receiving equal education, women face the choice to leave a promising career to stay home with children or the daily struggle to accomplish career goals while also being fully present for the family. Working women today encounter a myriad of issues, but one issue I want to call attention to is striving to find each woman's best balance between work and family.

A recent 2012 Pew survey found that for the first time among the age group of 18 to 34 year-olds, more young women than men rated “success in a high-paying career or profession” as important to their lives. However, many working women have additional burdens that are not equally shared by their husbands: in 2011, for example, women spent on average 47 more minutes per day than men doing household chores and 22 more minutes caring for their family. Handling this “second shift” of responsibilities after work or even the interruptions to work caused by family responsibilities can leave a woman feeling out of balance.

Fortunately, research on work-family conflict and enrichment can provide guidance. For instance, research finds that working does not necessarily sap from quality family time, but rather work and family domains can enrich each other. Engaging in both work and family can lead to lower distress, higher job and family satisfaction, and better work performance. And when husbands and wives share financial and childcare responsibilities, moms tend to experience less guilt and dads tend to be more involved with their children.

We also see that women have different preferences for managing the boundaries between work and family. Some prefer to segment family and work. These women would rather not discuss work hassles while at home or receive family calls while at work unless absolutely necessary. Other women prefer to integrate across the boundary, blending work and family in conversation and multitasking family duties while working and vice versa. The continual advancements in communication technology provide both help and hindrance to integrators. I will touch on research of these boundary management preferences along with my research in the areas of working mothers, negotiation, and servant leadership to offer specific suggestions to manage boundaries in line with individual preferences, as each woman finds her own tools and strategies to maintain a healthy balance, whether that balance is 50/50, 40/60 or 70/30.