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WHERE HAVE ALL THE FEMINISTS GONE?: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF
COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY

by

ERIN MAURER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2016

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Toward Gender Equality

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Erin Maurer

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in
Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

WHERE HAVE ALL THE FEMINISTS GONE?: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY

by

Erin Maurer

Advisor: Barbara Katz Rothman

The perceived lack of interest in feminism among “millennials” is a subject of continued debate in sociological literature as well as public discourse. While the U.S. women’s movement of the 1960s and ‘70s can claim some success in reducing educational and professional barriers, legalizing abortion, and transforming conceptions of sex/gender both in academia and in the wider culture, numerous obstacles to gender equality remain. Indeed, the paradox of the second-wave is that it was successful in so many respects that young women and men coming of age today might assume that gender equality is a *fait accompli*. For scholars and activists who remain committed to the contemporary feminist movement, one challenge is to bridge the gulf between older and younger feminists, who often lack understanding of one another’s experiences and perspectives. This dissertation speaks to that challenge by studying college students’ attitudes with regard to: (i) gender roles, (ii) feminism as an ideology, (iii) feminism as a social identity, and (iv) feminism as a social movement. This mixed-methods study problematizes the use of the word “feminist” in social science research and captures a snapshot of its various definitions from the perspective of millennial college students. Drawing on 2010-2016 survey data of 916 undergraduates at four U.S. universities and 63 semi-structured interviews with students from this sample, I investigate how college students interpret feminist ideology and apply it in their everyday social interactions.

The results of this study indicate that a gender gap persists relative to identification with feminism. Overall, 68 percent of females and 34 percent of males identified with feminism in open-ended surveys. In comparison, 88 percent of females and 67 percent of males identified with feminism when a basic definition was offered. Thus, in the absence of a definition, the majority of females did identify with feminism, while the majority of males did not. On the other hand, the majority of both females and males did identify with feminism as an ideology of gender equality when provided a definition. My findings indicate that the definition gap in identification with feminism is largely attributable to four sets of beliefs: (i) the belief that feminists are activists, (ii) the belief that feminists are extremists, (iii) the belief that feminists are anti-male, and (iv) the belief that only women can be feminists. For millennials, these beliefs have been shaped by growing up in the era of “postfeminism,” a neoliberal ideology that emerged in the 1990s, shifting focus from the society to the individual and celebrating consumerism while discouraging activism. Additionally, anti-feminist attitudes that emerged during the Reagan-Bush era linger into the second decade of the twenty-first century, casting feminists as anti-male extremists and promoting a variety of negative stereotypes. My research indicates that postfeminist and anti-feminist rhetoric continues to impact young people’s willingness to identify with the “feminist” label, especially for males. I employ social identity theory to contextualize these students’ resistance to feminist identification. This dissertation also draws on abeyance theory to situate contemporary feminism as a social movement relative to current political opportunity structures. Finally, the students in this study identified four key areas of gender inequality, which shape the body of this dissertation: (i) gender and work/family, (ii) gender and sport, (iii) rape culture, and (iv) body projects. This dissertation builds on the literature in feminism, gender and work, social identity, social movements, cultural studies, and the sociology of sport.

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This dissertation simply could not have been written without the wonderful women who have helped care for my son. I am thankful for my son's daycare teachers, whose patience and love have boosted his self-esteem. I thank my mother, Theresa Maurer, and mother-in-law, Rebecca McGrail, who pitched in with childcare when they could. And I thank my sister, Danielle Maurer Thangamuthu, for being a caring aunt and an integral part of my village. And of course, I thank my husband, Steve McGrail, who wholeheartedly embraced the role of primary parent in the homestretch of writing this dissertation. Finally, I am grateful to my son, Michael McGrail, now three years old, who supported me in his own little way by telling me, "Mommy, I'm going to drop you off at the library." I dedicate this work to him.

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Introduction

As I sip my coffee at the campus Starbucks on a sunny spring afternoon in May, I revel in people watching (or “participant observation” in this case), as students and professors bustle about in preparation for next week’s final exams. I am enjoying a rare moment to myself, as my son (who is now 15 months) is in daycare today so that I can conduct my dissertation research. Behind the counter, machines whir as the young baristas – a woman with pink hair and a man with tattoo-covered arms – steam milk for their customers’ lattes. Out one window, I watch a train pull up to the platform, ready to take its passengers into the city. Meanwhile, from the other entrance of the coffee shop, I can see students crossing the street toward the quad, where they are engulfed by green grass and blossoming cherry trees, the picturesque part of campus where photos for the university’s brochure are taken. From this entrance, my next interviewees arrive, first Alison, with her long sandy-blonde hair, wearing a floral summer dress. Soon after comes Robin, clad in jeans and hipster t-shirt, and sporting a black baseball cap with a scarf over her hair. Alison, whose ethnic background is Polish and Canadian, is white with hazel eyes and freckles. Both her appearance and demeanor give off the vibe of “girl next door” and it turns out she literally is, as she attended public high school in the town adjacent to campus. Robin, who self-identifies as “black American,” has captivating brown eyes and laughs easily, revealing perfect white teeth when she smiles. She is also a native of the state, but from a town about an hour’s drive from the university. Both students are juniors who call themselves “feminists” and when I inquire about personal experiences that have led them to feminism, they both cite sexual harassment as a major social problem in their everyday lives. When I ask for an example, Alison states without pause:

I have one right now. As I was walking here this group of little kids, like 8 to 12-year-olds, were walking towards me. This man was leading them. I smiled and said hello. And this girl is like, “Oh, hi, have a great day!” I thought, “Oh my god, that’s so friendly. Thank you!” And then a little boy said, “I love your dress.” I said, “Thank you.”

Then he said, “Just kidding. You should take it off!” And he was like 11 or 12. I turned around and said, “That is really inappropriate. You need to learn better.” I really wish that I had gone up to the man who was leading them and told him, “This is what he just said and you need to tell him that’s not okay.” All of his little friends were laughing. This is a college campus. He’s not even a college guy. And it’s just like ... I don’t know. It’s like I can’t even be angry anymore because this happens every single day, if not to me, to somebody else.

Robin nods in agreement and says, “Yeah, exactly.” This anecdote reveals a great deal both about Alison’s own life experience and the state of gender relations in the United States today. Alison is a 20-year old woman, walking on her own college campus. On the day I meet her, she has just been harassed on her way to our interview by a boy approximately half her age. As her friend Robin (and many other students I talked to in the course of this study) concurred, her story is not unique. While Alison and Robin self-identify as feminist, the majority of their college peers do not. In 2010, when I began my preliminary research for this study, I was intrigued by the discourse surrounding feminism both in popular culture and in sociology. Everyone was talking about how millennials were not interested in feminism. I wanted to find out for myself if this was true and, if so, why.

Indeed, we are living in an era that many regard as “postfeminist,” yet traditional gender roles continue to inform almost every aspect of our lives, from kitchen to boardroom. While American women coming of age and forging careers in the twenty-first century enjoy the fruits of first and second-wave feminist labor – the right to vote, the right to own property, access to higher education, access to birth control, and increased professional opportunities, to name a few – it is perhaps inevitable that they have also come to take the progress of the past century for granted. This leaves one to ponder the question, What has happened to feminism? Is there in fact a need for a “new wave” of the American women’s movement? If so, how has it been shaped by (and how is it different from) the previous waves?¹ How are young people today defining feminism

¹ While many feminists contest the concept of “waves” as a means of distinguishing between periods of feminist activism, it is nevertheless a commonly utilized term in both academic and popular feminist discourse.

and how does it shape their goals for the future? For millennials, these questions are complicated by the fact that they were born in the 1990s, an era when postfeminist and anti-feminist rhetoric hijacked public discourse around gender equality in the U.S. While feminism seeks to remedy gender inequality at a structural level, both postfeminism and anti-feminism are rooted in the idea that the feminist movement had achieved equality for women and girls by the end of the second wave. As contemporary feminist scholars have argued (McRobbie, 2009; Hanisch, 2011; Anderson, 2015), postfeminism is a neoliberal ideology that emphasizes superficial empowerment of the individual rather than social and structural transformation. Postfeminism ignores issues such as reproductive rights, pay equality, and workplace discrimination that the second wave brought into focus. Instead of encouraging women (and men) to be activists, postfeminism encourages them to be consumers. In postfeminism, sexual power and purchasing power are offered as substitutes for institutional, political, and economic power (McRobbie, 2009). Postfeminism has also been packaged as “choice feminism,” one version of “third wave” feminism that focuses on individualism instead of collective action. Meanwhile, anti-feminism also came into vogue in the 1990s, as Susan Faludi described in *Backlash* (1991). Also rooted in the idea that gender equality has already been achieved, anti-feminism promotes negative stereotypes of modern feminists. According to anti-feminist ideology, since women have already achieved equality with men, any woman who identifies as a feminist must be a female supremacist. Thus, anti-feminism perpetuates the “man-hating” myth, casting feminists as anti-male extremists who want to dominate and denigrate boys and men.

While many second-wave feminists lament the fact that so few young people seem interested in the women’s movement, legions of younger feminists express frustration when older feminists fail to recognize their contributions or to appreciate contemporary feminist activism in

its many incarnations. Young women may not be marching in the streets as often as their second-wave foremothers, but they are blogging (e.g. sites like Feministe, Jezebel, etc.) and expressing their feminism in other ways. For scholars and activists who remain committed to the contemporary feminist movement, one challenge is to bridge the gulf between older and younger feminists, who often lack understanding of one another's experiences and perspectives. This dissertation speaks to that challenge by studying college students' attitudes with regard to: (a) gender roles (in terms of both (i) their present experiences as college students and (ii) their future aspirations relative to career and family); (b) feminism as an ideology; and (c) the U.S. women's movement (both past and present). Further, this study has two additional aims: (1) to compare and contrast on a macro level what feminism looks like on college campuses in the U.S. (both public and private, in the Northeast and Southeast regions) and (2) to understand on a micro level how students develop feminist or antifeminist identities in the context of their college experience. Thus, a primary goal of this dissertation is to explore how young people interpret feminist ideology and apply it in their everyday social interactions. My aim here is to shed some light on (a) whether or not young people identify with the term "feminist," (b) how they define feminism for themselves and see it as relevant to their generation, and (c) what they deem to be the important goals of the 21st century women's movement. This dissertation seeks to unravel some of the complexities of identifying with feminism for young people living through the Obama era (2010-2014). First, in order to provide context for this study, a look back at the origins of the American women's movement.

First Wave: The Long Campaign for Suffrage

The first wave of the American feminist movement arose out of women's participation in the abolition movement of the mid-nineteenth century and culminated with the passage of the

Nineteenth Amendment securing women's right to vote in 1920. This movement occurred alongside, and largely in response to, what academics widely refer to as the "cult of domesticity." The historian Barbara Welter renamed this concept the "cult of true womanhood" in her 1966 essay, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." This cult of domesticity/true womanhood refers to the glorification of the "separate spheres" model, which took hold in the U.S. during industrialization when men (and working-class women) were called away from their homes and into factory work. As the economy shifted away from an agrarian model, so too, the model of the Euro-American family shifted to fit the industrial paradigm. It was this transition from family-based production to market-based production that resulted not only in what Marx referred to as man's alienation from his own labor, but also in trapping upper-class white women in their homes for the next hundred years.

While the cult of domesticity exalted the elite woman for her moral virtue and commitment to homemaking as a vocation, it was her confinement to this role as the only profession deemed appropriate for her that sparked feminist critique -- evidenced in works such as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (in which the heroine commits suicide) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (in which the heroine is driven mad). Both feminist classics were published in 1899, a half-century after the Seneca Falls Convention for women's equality (1848) launched the American women's movement. It is this period that we refer to as the first wave of American feminism. Many leaders of the first wave came to feminism through their work as abolitionists, championing both the emancipation of slaves and women's rights. Among the more notable feminist abolitionists of the first wave were Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), sisters Sarah Grimké (1792-1873) and Angelina Grimké (1805-1879), Harriet Tubman (1820-1913), Lucy Stone (1818-1893), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), and Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906). While all of

these women survived the Civil War years and saw the slaves freed by the Thirteenth Amendment (1865), none of them lived to see their dream of women's suffrage realized. Indeed, the campaign for this basic right lasted seventy-two years after the first official meeting for women's rights in Seneca Falls, New York. Many feminist activists carried the torch in the long march for equality, spanning several generations. Some of the more famous feminists of the latter part of the first wave included Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862-1931) champion of black women's rights; the radical anarchist Emma Goldman (1869-1940); Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), the inveterate birth control advocate; and Alice Paul (1885-1977), founder of the National Woman's Party, whose hunger strikes and other radical tactics have been credited with leading the suffrage movement to victory in its final years.

Second Wave: Beyond June Cleaver

The second wave of American feminism has often been linked to the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's call to arms, *The Feminine Mystique*, and continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s. An alumna of Smith, a prestigious women's college in Massachusetts, Friedan conducted an extensive survey of her cohort in 1957, fifteen years after their graduation. Her book was inspired by the 200 responses she received through both written surveys and in-depth interviews of her peers. Friedan described a universal feeling of malaise among her elite cohort, which she concluded to be a problem of epidemic proportion in American culture at large during this time, one she labeled "the problem that has no name." The problem she described was indeed the same problem described by Chopin and Gilman more than six decades earlier. The "problem without a name" was in fact the cult of domesticity.

While Friedan's book did not specifically address the needs of working-class women, nor did it exude a Martha Stewart-like effervescence for the art of homemaking, it did two important

things in its time. First, it named the problem. The problem, which Friedan labels “the feminine mystique” was merely “the cult of domesticity/true womanhood” repackaged and resold to a new generation, many of them war-weary veterans who ignited the postwar “baby-boom” of the late 1940s and 1950s. Following World War II the United States revived the cult of domesticity, relegating middle-class and upper-class (predominantly white) women to the role of “homemaker” and men to the role of “breadwinner.”

Second, Friedan’s book helped to create an agenda for the women’s movement. As a founding member of the National Organization of Women (NOW) and its president from 1966-1970, Friedan helped define and communicate the goals of the second-wave movement at large. While the first wave had focused primarily on voting rights, the second wave called for full social, political, and economic equality for women. Some of the goals of the second wave included: (1) equal access to higher education and the professions; (2) the right to safe and legal birth control including abortion; (3) ending gender discrimination in the workplace including equal pay and promotion; (4) ending sexual exploitation of women and girls; and (5) ending cultural practices which subordinated women to men. While NOW took a more legislative approach to seeking equal rights for women, another faction of the women’s movement was led by younger women, many of them college students. This group became known as the “Women’s Liberation Movement” (WLM). Just as many suffragists came to feminism through their work as abolitionists, legions of younger women joined the WLM in parallel with their work in the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s. These women were dismayed by the sexism they experienced from male colleagues in these movements, who expected women to play supporting roles to male leaders. Thus, their quest for social justice that began through their involvement with

civil rights and anti-Vietnam organizations continued through women's organizations for gender equality.

Third Wave: 1980 - 2000

The “third wave” of American feminism generally refers to the modern period beginning in 1980 and continuing up to the new millennium. In popular culture, third wave feminism is often represented as “choice feminism” in which women are depicted as empowered individuals making decisions for themselves based on a supposedly endless array of options from which they are “free” to choose. In truth, “choice feminism” is a postfeminist co-optation, removing the bones of feminism by shifting the focus from structural transformation to self-transformation. The popular HBO series *Sex and the City*, which ran from 1998 to 2004, captures this mainstream interpretation of third-wave feminism. Women are cast as individuals equally capable and driven towards professional success and sexual fulfillment as their male counterparts. Yet the word “feminist” is rarely used and, when it does crop up, comes across as a rather watered-down version of liberal feminism. This version of feminism tends to emphasize the opportunities open to women – without referencing the hard-won battles fought by first and second wave feminists along the way – and rarely acknowledges glass ceilings or other structural elements of gender inequality. In contrast, third-wave academic feminism takes up where the second wave left off, with an increased emphasis on race and class differences, multiculturalism, intersectionality, and globalization. In its quest to be more inclusive, the feminist movement has run up against new obstacles. For instance, feminist theory challenges the very idea of binary gender categories (male/female) and draws attention to the social constructivism and performative nature of gender (Butler, 1990). Without a unifying concept of what it means to be a “woman” and without a singular definition of

what “feminism” stands for, any social movement organization that claims to work on behalf of “women” or views itself as “feminist” must begin by addressing this problem of definition.

Postfeminism and Millennials: I’m not a feminist, but ...

In the popular media, feminism is frequently portrayed as a social movement of a bygone era, with “millennials” finding little use for feminism based on the assumption that gender equality has already been achieved. This is a narrative that the media has seized upon and exploited once again in the 2016 Democratic Primary season, casting millennial women who support Senator Sanders as “postfeminist” and older women who support Secretary Clinton as “the diehard feminists.” And yet again, the media turned to Gloria Steinem as the sole voice of feminism to explain why “young women” and “older women” can’t agree, despite the fact that many millennial women support Clinton² and many older women support Sanders. Indeed, the perceived lack of interest in feminism among millennials is a subject of continued debate in sociological literature (Williams and Wittig, 1997; Myaskovsky and Wittig, 1997; Liss, O’Connor, Morosky, and Crawford, 2001; McCabe, 2005; Houvaras and Carter, 2008) as well as public discourse (Levy, 2005; Siegel, 2007; Weinberger, 2012). Young people today are often not aware of the history and goals of the second wave and do not remember a time when girls did not have access to sports or go to college in equal or greater numbers than their male counterparts.

Just as second-wave feminism seems passé to many young women today, the women’s movement of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century seemed irrelevant to many

² A number of celebrity millennials have come out in support of Secretary Clinton, including Lena Dunham (writer, director, and star of the hit TV show “Girls”), Amy Schumer (comedian, writer, and star of her own TV show “Inside Amy Schumer”), and America Ferrera (actor currently starring in the TV show “Superstore”).

daughters of first-wave feminists once the goal of suffrage had been attained, as argued in this passage by Friedan:

Did women really go home again as a reaction to feminism? The fact is that to women born after 1920, feminism was dead history. It ended as a vital movement in America with the winning of that final right: the vote. In the 1930s and 40s, the sort of woman who fought for woman's rights was still concerned with human rights and freedom – for Negroes, for oppressed workers, for victims of Franco's Spain and Hitler's Germany. But no one was much concerned with the rights of women: they had all been won. And yet the man-eating myth prevailed. Women who displayed any independence or initiative were called "Lucy Stoners." "Feminist," like "career woman," became a dirty word (Friedan: 93).

Indeed, the backlash against feminism -- that Susan Faludi would later describe in response to the second wave -- had already begun following the first wave of American feminism. Faludi argued in *Backlash* (1991) that despite claims made by the media that the women's movement was over and that gender equality had been achieved, structural sexism persisted and had in some areas worsened. Feminism became the frequent subject of ridicule under the Reagan-Bush era of the 1980s and early 1990s. The backlash against feminism was evident in various cultural markers: in the mainstream media outlets, in popular psychology, and especially in the rise of the new Right in American politics. This backlash against feminism, led by conservative right-wing Republicans in the decades following the feminist revolution of the 1970s, mirrors the backlash against women's progress that occurred following WWII, with the revival of the "cult of domesticity" that Friedan renamed "the feminine mystique." The negative stereotypes associated with feminism as a result of the late-twentieth-century backlash are alive and well today, and help to explain why young people are often wary of the label "feminist," even when they espouse egalitarian values.

One of the most common topics of discussion in feminist discourse today is the disconnect between second-wave feminists and young women coming of age in the "postfeminist" era who may be reluctant to call themselves feminists. Myriad feminists have written about this issue, among them Lisa Hogeland, a professor of women's studies, in her 1994 essay, "Fear of Feminism: Why young women get the willies".'

Some people may argue that young women have far less to lose by becoming feminists than do older women: they have a smaller stake in the system and fewer ties to it. At the same time, though, young women today have been profoundly affected by the demonization of feminism during the 12 years of Reagan and Bush--the time when they formed their understanding of political possibility and public life. Older women may see the backlash as temporary and changeable; younger women may see it as how things are. The economic situation for college students worsened over those 12 years as well, with less student aid available, so that young women may experience their situation as extremely precarious--too precarious to risk feminism.

Despite all the lip service paid to questioning whether or not young women today are inspired by or frightened by the word “feminist,” two early twenty-first century polls, one conducted by *Ms.* Magazine in 2003 and another by CBS in 2005, found that the majority of women do in fact self-identify as “feminists” when presented with a concrete definition of the word. The design of poll questions as well as the definition of the word “feminist” matters a great deal when attempting to capture people’s attitudes towards feminism. The 2003 *Ms.* poll and the 2005 CBS poll are excellent examples of this phenomenon. In 2003, a *Ms.* Magazine poll found that 53% of all women surveyed self-identified as feminists. Young women aged 18-29 were even more likely to call themselves feminists (61%). After being read a dictionary definition of feminism, the number of women self-identifying as feminists skyrocketed to 77%. This represents a 21% increase since a poll taken seventeen years earlier (1986) by Gallup/Newsweek, which found that 56% of all women considered themselves feminists. Further, 70% of the men surveyed by *Ms.* in 2003 also self-identified as feminists when presented with a dictionary definition of the word. Similarly, in 2005 an initial poll conducted by CBS on the effects of the women's movement indicated that the feminist label continued to be met with resistance by most women. When asked if they considered themselves to be feminists, only 24% of those polled answered in the affirmative. However, when the question was preceded by a definition of feminism, that number shot up to 65% of respondents. In both the *Ms.* and CBS polls, a feminist was described as “someone who believes in the social,

political, and economic equality of the sexes,” the definition found in *Webster’s Dictionary*³. Further, the 2003 *Ms.* poll reported, “an overwhelming majority of both women and men feel favorably toward the movement to strengthen women’s rights – and again, the highest support comes from young women. Overall, 83% of women and 75% of men feel favorable toward the women’s movement, according to the *Ms.* 2003 poll – and a whopping 92% of women aged 18-24 feel the same.”

Inspired and intrigued by the results of these polls, I was curious to find out what today’s college students are thinking and doing in relation to feminism. Because college students played such a significant role in the formation of the WLM of the second-wave, I became interested in studying this group’s attitudes toward feminism in the present day. Hence, I began my preliminary dissertation research on college campuses in the spring of 2010, and completed the bulk of the interviews between the spring of 2012 and the fall of 2014. For the purposes of this dissertation, I focused specifically on young people (both female and male) who were under the age of 30 and in college during the research period. In contrast to the grassroots “consciousness-raising” groups that erupted around the country in the 1960s and 70s, young people today are more likely to encounter feminist discourse in the college classroom and/or social media networks. This dissertation problematizes the use of the word “feminist” in social science research and seeks to capture its various definitions from the perspective of undergraduate college students. While the women’s movement of the 1960s and ‘70s can claim some success in reducing educational and professional barriers, legalizing abortion, and transforming conceptions of sex/gender both in academia and in the wider culture, numerous obstacles to gender equality remain. Indeed, the

³ See <http://www.msmagazine.com/winter2004/thirdwave.asp> and <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/05/14/opinion/polls/main1616577.shtml>

paradox of the second-wave is that it was successful in so many respects that young women and men coming of age today often assume that gender equality is a fait accompli. Additionally, anti-feminist rhetoric that gained traction during the Reagan-Bush decades and postfeminist rhetoric that emerged in the 1990s continues to have an impact on young people's willingness to identify with the "feminist" label. This stigmatization of the very term "feminist" is not just an issue for young people but for the population at large. Indeed, the "stall" in the feminist movement can be better understood when we consider political attitudes in a broader context. A 2011 study of gender role attitudes in the GSS found that not only have progressive attitudes toward gender plateaued since 1994 (after increasing egalitarianism from 1974-1994), but liberal attitudes in general have plateaued since the mid-1990s (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman, 2011).

Literature Review: Feminism as a Social Identity

While many scholars have noted the disconnect among American youth between support for gender equality and unwillingness to self-identify with the term "feminist" (Renzetti, 1987; Griffin, 1989; Kamen, 1991; Cowan, Mestlin, and Masek, 1992; Henderson-King and Stewart, 1994; Buschman and Lenart, 1996), research on the factors that influence feminist self-identification (whether an individual considers herself or himself a feminist), or the correlation between feminist self-identification and gender-related attitudes, is relatively recent. Most of these studies have been quantitative in nature and have focused primarily on the sociodemographic predictors of gender-related attitudes and feminist consciousness in national samples (Plutzer, 1988; Rhodebeck, 1996; Reingold and Foust, 1998). Despite these limitations, this body of research has produced some useful data regarding factors that correlate with one's propensity to self-identify as a feminist. This section provides an overview of the consistent and contradictory

findings within the scholarship on feminist identity, with a focus on studies of college students that are especially relevant to this project.

Several studies have found a strong correlation between feminist identity and ideological support for gender equality (Cowan et al., 1992; Williams and Wittig, 1997; Houvouras and Carter, 2008). Similarly, feminist identity is associated with having a positive evaluation of feminists (Cowan et al., 1992; Williams and Wittig, 1997; Liss et al., 2001; Houvouras and Carter, 2008). In addition, a belief in collective action has been shown to contribute to the prediction of feminist social identity (Cowan et al., 1992; Williams and Wittig, 1997; Liss et al., 2001). Researchers have also found, among males, a negative relationship between high masculinity and willingness to consider oneself a feminist (Jackson, Fleury, and Lewandowski, 1996; Twenge, 1999; Burn, Aboud, and Moyles, 2000; Toller, Suter, and Trautman, 2004). Further, women are more likely than men to self-identify as feminists (Williams and Wittig, 1997; Twenge and Zucker, 1999; McCabe, 2005; Houvouras and Carter, 2008). Finally, scholars have found a statistically significant link between exposure to feminism and willingness to identify with the feminist label (Myaskovsky and Wittig, 1997; Reid and Purcell, 2004).

While the aforementioned findings have been consistent across time, the research to date on feminist identity has also yielded some inconsistent and at times contradictory findings due to a lack of uniform variable(s) designed to measure feminist attitudes as well as a limited set of questions in national surveys such as the GSS (McCabe, 2005). Findings on the relationship between race and feminism as well as sexual preference and feminism have been particularly problematic. For instance, one study (Ibid) found that although support for feminist goals and egalitarian gender roles is shared by women of color, few self-identify as feminists. Yet this same study found race was *not* a statistically significant factor in predicting feminist self-identification,

conflicting with concerns that the feminist movement is strictly white/middle-upper class (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1984, 2000; Nelson, 2001). In contrast, another study (Twenge and Zucker, 1999) found that among college students, people of color were more likely to identify as feminist. Twenge and Zucker (1999) also found that undergraduate respondents viewed feminists as more likely to be heterosexual than lesbian, while others (Liss et al., 2001; Houvouras and Carter, 2008) found a strong correlation between the perception that feminists are lesbians and non-identification with feminism.

Literature Review: Feminism as a Social Movement

Of course, feminism is more than a social identity. Feminism is also an ideology that drives collective action or, when successful, a social movement. Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper define a social movement as “a collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, powerholders, or cultural beliefs and practices” (Goodwin and Jasper, 2009). Based on this definition, feminism as a social movement in the U.S. seems to be in a state of decline since it peaked in the late 1970s.

Here I turn to social movement theory to help explain why this happened and to situate the American women’s movement in the broader context of social movements in general. Social movements have life cycles. These life cycles can be broken down into four stages: (1) emergence, (2) coalescence, (3) bureaucratization, and (4) decline (Blumer, 1969). From this vantage, we can see that decline is inevitable and therefore not necessarily negative. Further, decline can happen for a variety of reasons: (1) repression, (2) co-optation, (3) success, (4) failure, and (5) establishment within the mainstream (Miller, 1999). This framework allows us to see that social movements may decline as a result of either success or failure. On one hand, the women’s movement has been a victim of its own success. This was the case in 1920 with the attainment of

the vote at the end of the first wave. Without this unifying goal, many women who had been active suffragists were no longer motivated to remain in the movement for gender equality. In contrast, the failure to ratify the ERA by 1982 is seen by many as the end of second-wave feminism as a social movement (Mansbridge, 1986).

William Gamson (1990) found that social movements with more bureaucratic organizations were more successful. In contrast, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward (1979) found that the most powerful tool of the oppressed is their ability to disrupt things (Goodwin and Jasper, 2009). Both of these findings lend insight with respect to the evolution of the women's movement from the second wave to the present. In some ways the more bureaucratic organizations, such as the National Organization of Women (NOW), have had more long-term success than the less hierarchical and "leaderless" groups such as New York Radical Women. Yet the radical branch of the WLM that famously disrupted the 1968 Miss America Pageant is what drew media focus and captured the attention of the American public. Susan Brownmiller (1999) describes the WLM as consisting of two main camps: (1) the liberal feminists who worked to reform gender inequality in more organized, structural ways, and (2) the radical feminists who envisioned a gender revolution and preferred grassroots tactics and communication. In contrast, Barbara Epstein (2001) argues that the contemporary women's movement consists of: (1) relatively cautious bureaucratic organizations (e.g. NOW, National Women's Political Caucus) and (2) more daring, less visible grassroots organizations focusing on specific feminist issues. She laments that what we do not have is a sector of the women's movement that does what radical feminism once did: (1) address the issue of women's subordination generally and (2) place women's subordination within a critique of society as a whole.

The question remains: how did the second wave of the women's movement arise and why did it decline? Why has the radical branch seemingly disappeared from the contemporary movement? As Goodwin and Jasper (2009) point out, much more has been written about why social movements arise compared with why they decline, fall into a state of "abeyance" (Taylor, 1989), or cease to exist. Of the explanations offered for social movement decline, two primary reasons are most often cited: (1) surrounding political environment and (2) internal dynamics and evolution. With respect to the former, it has often been argued that the political environment of the 1960s and '70s was conducive to a resurgence of feminist activity (after four decades of abeyance since the attainment of suffrage in 1920). Indeed, many women who were active in other social justice movements (such as civil rights and antiwar) in the 1960s soon joined the movement for women's rights (Evans, 1979, 2003; Giardina, 2010). In contrast, the conservative political environment marked by the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 was hostile to feminist ideology and activity. In this respect the women's movement suffered from a cultural "backlash" against feminism (Faludi, 1991). Resource mobilization theory, which emphasizes the role of social movement leaders and their ability to mobilize resources (namely time, money, and energy) and direct those resources into effective political action, is useful here.

The resource mobilization perspective is attributed to the work of McCarthy and Zald (1976), Gamson (1968, 1975), Oberschall (1973), and Tilly (1978). Their work departs from the collective behavior perspective that dominated social movement theory until the 1960s, in which social movement participants were viewed as irrational and dangerous. In contrast, social movement organizations were viewed as rational, and thus protesters came to be understood in a more *rational* context. Goodwin and Jasper (2009) describe the main tenets of resource mobilization as follows: (1) social movements may or may not be based upon the grievances of

the presumed beneficiaries. Conscience constituents, individual and organizational may provide sources of support; (2) the concern with interaction between movements and authorities is accepted, but it is also noted that social movement organizations have a number of strategic tasks including mobilizing supporters and neutralizing and/or transforming mass and elite publics into sympathizers; (3) society provides the infrastructure which social movement industries utilize (i.e. communications media and expense, levels of affluence, degree of access to institutional centers, preexisting networks, and occupational structure and growth).

Based on the resource mobilization perspective, it is possible that the radical arm of the women's movement is not gone for good but rather in a prolonged state of abeyance (Taylor, 1989). As Epstein points out, for most Americans (especially professionals), the workplace has become more stressful and competitive and the culture as a whole has become increasingly individualistic. Meanwhile, as Arlie Hochschild (1989, 1997) found in her studies of how dual-career couples with children negotiate paid labor and domestic labor, the stresses on the homefront have also significantly increased since the mid-twentieth century. Given the right political timing, effective leadership, and appropriate resources, it is possible that feminists may succeed in mobilizing a more radical movement in the twenty-first century that would address the structural factors impacting both the workplace and the domestic sphere. It is from this resource mobilization perspective that I approached this study of college students and feminism. I was curious to find out if students felt that feminism as an ideology was relevant to their generation. In other words, did they feel a need to continue the work begun by the women's movement? Second, I wanted to find out what they felt the climate was on their campus and in the wider culture with regard to feminism. Put another way, what was the surrounding political environment, and was it conducive to feminist activism?

Sociological Contribution

While others have studied college students' definitions of feminism (Houvouras and Carter, 2008) and propensity to self-identify with the feminist label (Liss et al., 2001), most of these studies have been limited to survey research and fall short of exploring the ways in which students' definitions of feminism impact their lived experiences on campus as well as their future aspirations. As Houvouras and Carter (2008) noted, the literature on feminist identity has been largely quantitative in nature and has failed to compare definitions provided by feminists and nonfeminists in an open-ended format. While Houvouras and Carter (2008) directly ask students to define feminism, their study has several key limitations. First, their sample explores only one region of the United States (the Southeast). Second, their study compares data from only two schools (one community college and one public university). Third, the interviews were only ten minutes in length, they were not recorded or written verbatim, and they were conducted by untrained undergraduate students. In contrast, my sample compares two regions of the United States (the Northeast and the Southeast) drawn from four schools (two public universities and two private universities). This broader sample is intended to yield data that is both more generalizable to the entire population and/or comparative between regions. Additionally, my interviews are significantly longer in duration (30-90 minutes compared to 10 minutes), they were recorded and transcribed for deeper and more accurate analysis, and they were also conducted by the researcher, yielding greater depth, precision of data, consistency, and comparability. This study is unique in its mixed-methods approach, drawing upon survey data and in-depth interviews to examine how college students define feminism for themselves as well as how feminist ideology is incorporated (or not) into their curriculum, their involvement in student groups and activities on campus, their everyday social interactions, and their future goals relative to career and family.

When I began this project, I was initially interested in exploring feminism as a social movement through the eyes of college students. I was curious to find out if today's college students felt included in the women's movement and/or if they had made it their own. However, in surveying and talking with students it quickly became clear that the majority of students felt disconnected from feminism as a social movement (see Findings section). Even for those who embraced feminism as a social identity, many felt that the word "feminist" had become so stigmatized that it was difficult to interest their peers in joining a movement that rallied around "women's issues." The students I interviewed universally reported that feminism was unpopular among their peers. Despite this, the majority of these students expressed a desire for gender equality and believed there was a need for their generation to continue the work begun by the women's movement. Specifically, students reported gender discrimination or lack of equality in four key areas, which shape the body of this dissertation: (1) navigating career and family, (2) equal treatment in college and professional sports, (3) rape culture, and (4) body projects.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation explores the underlying power relations and cultural scripts that link these four facets of gender inequality together. I use Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to frame and analyze how both micro interactions and macro discourses work in tandem to normalize gender inequality. I also draw on Judith Butler's concept of "gender performance" to understand why and how college students behave according to gendered social scripts. Finally, I utilize Michel Foucault's concepts of "disciplinary power" and "self-surveillance" to shed light on how gendered patterns of behavior are produced and reproduced on college campuses and in the wider culture. I make use of these three theorists throughout Chapters 1-4 to illustrate the similarities that serve as the foundation for gender inequality in each of the four key areas identified by college

students in this study. In addition, I draw on Max Weber's concept of "ideal types" throughout as well as Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" in two of the four main chapters.

Chapter Outline

In chapter one, "The Feminization of the Work-Family Conflict," I discuss the lasting impact of the separate spheres model. I argue that students are constrained in their thinking by a traditional family model that links masculinity with professional success and femininity with raising children. Thus, I frame "choices" about work and family within a Gramscian context of hegemonic masculinity. I also draw on the work of Erving Goffman (1959) to analyze the phenomenon of "effortless perfectionism" at elite colleges. Throughout, I situate my findings within the broader framework of trends in U.S. women's labor force participation.

In chapter two, "Female Athletes as Pinups and Fashionistas: Gender Inequality in Collegiate and Professional Sports," I apply Weber's concept of "ideal types" to analyze how female athletes are portrayed as either sex objects ("Bunnies") or fashion models ("Barbies"), both types serving the dual function of trivializing women's sports, while alienating women from their own bodies in the context of consumerism (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947; Bordo, 1999; Giulianotti, 2005; Dworkin and Wachs, 2009). I demonstrate how college students, especially athletes, internalize cultural messages about achieving the "right kind of body" and how ideal body types are gendered within a context of dichotomous categories (Epstein, 1988). I also employ Butler's concept of "performing gender" and Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" to explain female athletes' participation in practices that simultaneously promote and exploit them.

Chapter three, "Rape Culture: a Collegiate and National Crisis," situates sexual assault in the broader context of a culture that objectifies and demeans women as a means of preserving the

gendered social order. This chapter builds on the discussion of hegemonic masculinity started in the first two chapters. Here I employ a number of Foucault's concepts including "regimes of practice" and "self-discipline" to explain how and why rape culture operates within student populations. This chapter also utilizes the theory of "symbolic interactionism" to examine the role of institutions in the production and reproduction of rape culture on college campuses.

In chapter four, "Body Projects: Women's Bodies under Surveillance," I engage Foucault's concept of "surveillance" to analyze how college students navigate hookup culture, gendered beauty ideals, and sexual harassment within a context of hegemonic masculinity, consumerism, and healthism (Crawford, 1980). I also draw on Butler's work on gendered self-presentation and Bourdieu's concepts of "social capital" and "cultural capital" to shed light on how and why individuals conform to pre-established gendered scripts relative to bodily presentation. I link the themes in this chapter to those presented in chapter two by further developing the discussion of idealized body types (i.e. "Bunny/Barbie") and gender.

Methods and Sample

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach involving survey data as well as in-depth interviews. I chose this methodology with the intention of filling a gap in the literature on attitudes toward feminism that has been largely survey-driven so far. The intent of this study was to reach beyond dichotomous categories that label people either "feminist" or "not-feminist" and to uncover the reasons behind students' willingness or unwillingness to align themselves with feminism. Further, the goal of this study was to showcase the issues that students themselves associated with gender inequality and found relevant to their generation. In addition, I sought to understand the paradox of espoused support for gender equality coupled with an unwillingness to identify with the feminist label (Renzetti, 1987; Griffin, 1989; Kamen, 1991; Cowan et al., 1992;

Henderson-King and Stewart, 1994; Buschman and Lenart, 1996) and to add to the literature on the subject of young people and feminism. Data for this study was drawn from surveys and in-depth interviews with undergraduate college students (ages 18-29) from four universities in the Northeast and Southeast regions of the U.S.⁴ Throughout this dissertation I refer to these schools by the following pseudonyms: (1) “Legacy University” for the elite school in the Northeast, (2) “Acorn University” for the public school in the Northeast, (3) “Whitney University” for the elite school in the Southeast, and (4) “Jackson University” for the public school in the Southeast. My sample consists of one public and one private institution in the Northeast, as well as one public and one private institution in the Southeast. The schools were selected in order to provide regional diversity as well as institutional diversity with the goal of capturing a wide range of attitudes among students from both public and private institutions.

In total, my research includes survey data from 916 undergraduates, 63 interviews with students drawn primarily from this sample, as well as 10 interviews with university staff and feminist advocates. Of the 63 interviews with students, 57 came from the survey portion of this research and six came from referrals from the anti-violence programs at two of the schools in this study (two at Legacy and four at Acorn). On every survey I distributed in classrooms, the last question asked if the student would be willing to participate in an interview or focus group, and if so, to provide their contact information. This is how I was able to draw 90% of my interviewees. The remaining six interviews were made possible by the directors of the anti-violence programs at two of the schools forwarding an email from me to their student volunteers. From these contacts, six students contacted me directly to arrange an interview. I also observed two undergraduate

⁴ This project has received approval from the Institutional Review Board of Baruch College at the City University of New York.

sociology courses in the research and recruitment process: one was a “sociology of gender” class at Acorn University and the other was a “sociology of sport” class at Legacy University. Due to time and budget constraints, I was not able to observe classes at the Southern schools, as my schedule limited me to back-to-back interviews with students during my visits to Whitney University and Jackson University. The pilot study for this research took place in April 2010 at Acorn University, from which five of the student interviews are drawn. The remaining 68 interviews (58 student and 10 non-student) were conducted between April 2012 and December 2014. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and 90 minutes, with the average interview lasting one hour. All of the interviews (N = 73) were conducted by me, the researcher.

I began by surveying undergraduate college students in large general education courses as well as women’s and gender studies courses in an effort to capture the experiences and attitudes of students with varying degrees of exposure to feminism as an ideology. I crafted two versions of a short survey that asked students if they identified with feminism. Both surveys asked respondents if they considered themselves to be feminist. However, they differed in that one version of the survey allowed respondents to define feminism in an open-ended format, while the other version of the survey prompted respondents with a basic definition of feminism (a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes). In order to gain understanding of the discrepancy between students’ willingness to self-identify as “feminist” in an open-ended format versus when provided a definition, I conducted interviews with students who had taken the survey and subsequently volunteered to be interviewed. About halfway through the study, after some preliminary themes had emerged from the interviews, I added a question to the survey which asked students to indicate which social identities they applied to themselves. Thus my findings reflect both results from the entire sample (N = 916) as well as results from this sub-

sample (N = 449), which is close to half the size of the larger sample. The survey portion of this study served several key functions in my research: (1) to compare the results of those who identify with feminism when provided with a definition of the word versus open-ended format, (2) to capture respondents' own definitions of feminism, and (3) to recruit students to participate in interviews for the qualitative portion of the research.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with two exceptions. In one case, the student's work schedule and my childcare schedule made it difficult to meet in person. In the other case, the student had to reschedule at the last minute and was not available until my out-of-state research trip to her school had ended. In these two cases, I conducted interviews over the phone. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview format with students from each of the four institutions in my sample. The majority of the interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis between myself and the interviewee. A handful of the interviews were conducted between myself and 2-3 students together (two were joint interviews and three were focus groups). Of the 63 students who participated in interviews, 49% are from universities in the Northeast and 51% are from universities in the Southeast. Broken down by school, 30% are from Acorn University (N = 19), 19% are from Legacy University (N = 12), 24% are from Jackson University (N = 15), and 27% are from Whitney University (N = 17). Thus, 46% of the students in the sample attend elite institutions and 54% attend public institutions. Broken down by gender, 27% are male (N = 17) and 73% are female (N = 46). Of those who identified as male, all were cis-males. Of those who identified as female, two were trans-females and forty-four were cis-females. Broken down by race, 62% identified as white (N = 39), 21% identified as black (N = 13), 6% identified as API or South Asian (N = 4), 6% identified as mixed-race (N = 4), and 5% identified as Hispanic (N = 3).

The semi-structured interview provided a guide for the interview to capture the essential themes within a flexible model that allowed for discussion (Schensul et al., 1999). This model allowed me as the researcher to ask follow-up and clarifying questions based on participants' responses. It also allowed participants to emphasize the topics that mattered most to them. In advance of the interviews I created an interview schedule that included demographic data points as well as questions that broadly covered a range of topics including career aspirations, relationship and family goals, coursework in gender studies, and issues students themselves identified as feminist. The questions were open-ended and concentrated on participants' own experiences both in daily life and academic settings relative to gender, and general knowledge of feminist issues. The interviews were audio-recorded with permission from the participants. The audio-files were fully transcribed using Sound Organizer and Microsoft Word software. Finally, the transcripts were organized and analyzed using Microsoft Word and Excel software to track recurring themes. In reviewing the recurring themes from the interviews, four main themes stood out, which make up the body of this dissertation. These themes were student-driven and emerged from my informants' responses to questions about the state of gender relations on their college campus and/or asking them to name a feminist issue they considered to be relevant to their generation. Pseudonyms are used throughout this study to protect the identity of the participants and their institutions. It is common practice in conducting qualitative research with human subjects to guarantee confidentiality to interview participants, both to protect individuals from any potential harm, as well as to facilitate an environment where subjects feel at ease and can be forthcoming. I also chose not to use the names of their schools for two reasons. First, I wanted to maintain generalizability of the data and did not want readers to be influenced by any preconceptions or biases they may hold toward particular institutions. Second, I wanted to ensure that students felt

safe to be forthcoming with the information they shared. I noticed that students at the elite schools especially were conscious of their university's reputation and at times would pull back after saying something critical of their institution.

In addition to interviewing college students, I also conducted 10 other interviews with a variety of university staff as well as leaders in the larger feminist community including: (1) the director of the young women's leadership program at Whitney University, (2) the director of the women's center at Whitney University, (3) the director and assistant director of the Anti-Violence program at Acorn University, (4) the director of the LGBT center at Acorn University, (5) the director and assistant director of the Anti-Violence program at Legacy University, (6) the administrative coordinator of the Gender and Sexuality Studies program at Legacy University, (7) a board member of the Younger Women's Task Force in New York City, and (8) Jennifer Baumgardner, third-wave feminist leader and director of The Feminist Press at City University of New York. In the case of the university staff members, I took notes throughout the interviews but did not audio-record them. For the two interviews with New York City-based feminists, I did (with permission) audio-record the interviews in addition to taking notes. While the content of these interviews is not included in the presentation of my findings, these conversations with feminists in the community, both in and outside the universities, helped steer my interviews with students and provided context for my thinking about millennials and feminism. Their input was mainly utilized to understand the role of institutional supports for feminism in university settings and in considering the implications for the contemporary feminist movement, given the attitudes of today's college students.

Limitations of Research

I found that the majority of students who volunteered to participate in interviews were those who identified as feminist. Of the 63 students in my interview sample, 79% indicated that they considered themselves feminists, while 21% did not. This distribution parallels the distribution of students overall who identified with feminism when a definition was provided. However, one of the obstacles I encountered in my research was that very few non-feminists from the elite schools were interested in being interviewed. Of the 13 non-feminist students who participated in interviews, 11 were from state schools and only two were from elite schools. Since the focus of this study was on how students understood feminism to be relevant to their generation, the fact that my sample consists mostly of feminist-identified students did not hinder this research. Although I did not have much access to non-feminist students at the elite schools, my informants did. I therefore incorporate their insights and reflections on their social interactions with non-feminist peers in my analysis. Certainly, understanding the perspectives of elite students who don't identify with feminism (both male and female) is a valuable endeavor, and this is an area for future research.

Another limitation of this study is that females are overrepresented among elite students in my interview sample. While females make up 52% of the population in general, they comprise 97% of my interviewees at elite schools. In contrast, females make up 53% of my interviewees at public schools, closely reflecting the gender ratio of the general population. When I had the opportunity to visit a classroom for recruitment, I emphasized that I was interested in talking with both male and female students, that there were no wrong answers, and that I was interested in hearing from students with a variety of perspectives. I also emphasized that the interviews would be completely confidential. Nevertheless, I found that male students at elite universities were

reluctant to talk with me.⁵ In a number of cases, male students and non-feminist students indicated that they were willing to be interviewed, but when I contacted them to schedule a time to meet, they backed out, usually stating that they “didn’t have time.” Additionally, a number of interviewees offered to connect me with their male friends at elite schools, but either they or their male friends did not follow through. This was a frustrating, but not altogether surprising, obstacle in my research. I suspect that a male researcher, particularly one with athletic and/or Ivy credentials himself, would have more success in recruiting elite male students to participate in interviews. Again, understanding the perspectives of elite male students (both feminist and non-feminist) is an important part of understanding the larger picture relative to millennials and feminism and constitutes an area for future research.

Finally, as with any study involving human subjects, the potential for sampling bias must be addressed. My survey data (N = 916) was collected primarily from students enrolled in classes in the humanities, although this is not a reflection of the students’ majors. Among the entire survey sample, 11% (N = 103) were drawn from Women’s and Gender Studies (WGS) classes (including Women as Leaders, Sociology of Gender and Work, and Sociology of Marriage and Family), and 89% (N = 814) were drawn from other classes as follows: Sociology (non-WGS) 49% (N = 453), History 32% (N = 297), Anthropology 3% (N = 24), Kinesiology 3% (N = 22), and English 2% (N = 18). Given that not all students enrolled in WGS classes are majors or minors in the discipline, and also that surveys from these classes represent only 11% of my sample, the data from the survey findings is not disproportionately influenced by students concentrating in WGS. However, since 97% of my survey data is drawn from classes in the humanities, it is worth noting

⁵ One male student from “Legacy” University volunteered to be interviewed in this study. This student self-identified as a feminist and was active in a men’s group working to end violence on campus.

that there is a potential for sampling bias here. It is possible that research drawn from students enrolled in Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics (STEM) classes would yield different results.

With regard to my interview sample (N = 63), I did find that students who identified as feminist were more interested in being interviewed, as already noted. Further, one of the goals of the qualitative portion of this study was to learn from those who identify as feminist what issues they consider to be relevant to their generation. As such, 25% (N = 16) of my interviewees came from either the WGS surveys (N = 10) or the campus anti-violence programs (N = 6). The majority of my interviewees, 75% (N = 47), were drawn from the surveys in the other humanities. The four themes that emerged from my interviews with students were emphasized by both WGS and non-WGS students alike. Therefore, I don't believe sampling bias is an issue here as it pertains to the ratio of WGS students interviewed. Rather, the self-selection of students who identified with feminism, hailing from a variety of classes and majors, was the more pertinent issue here, as already discussed. Since the interviews were drawn from students who took the survey, my interview sample reflects the same population of students as the survey sample. Although the surveys were distributed primarily in classes in the humanities, some of my interviewees were majoring in the STEM fields. I did not find significant differences between these students and students majoring in the humanities relative to the four themes that emerged overall. However, it is possible that research drawn from students enrolled in STEM classes would yield more emphasis on issues related to gender and the STEM fields.

III. – i. Findings from Survey Research -- Tables

Table 1 – This table reports findings for the following Sections:

- i. General Findings
- ii. Comparison by Gender
- iii. Comparison by Gender and Elite/Public Institutions

Table 1

	Acorn	Jackson	Legacy	Whitney	Aggregate
	N = 214	N = 302	N = 252	N = 148	N = 916
Feminist (Open-ended)	32% (N = 56/175)	48% (N = 71/147)	67% (N = 114/170)	82% (N = 63/77)	53% (N = 304/569)
Feminist (Dictionary- defined)	77% (N = 30/39)	79% (N = 122/155)	80% (N = 66/82)	82% (N = 58/71)	80% (N = 276/347)
Increase when definition given	45% (male) 45% (female)	36% (male) 26% (female)	18% (male) 8% (female)	20% (male) 9% (female)	30% (male) 22% (female)
Male Students – Feminist (Open-ended)	22% (N = 22/98)	35% (N = 19/54)	46% (N = 39/84)	45% (N = 5/11)	34% (N = 85/247)
Female Students – Feminist (Open-ended)	44% (N = 34/77)	56% (N = 52/93)	87% (N = 75/86)	88% (N = 58/66)	68% (N = 219/322)
Gender Difference (Open-ended)	22%	21%	41%	43%	42%
Male Students – Feminist (Dictionary)	67% (N = 14/21)	71% (N = 29/41)	64% (N = 25/39)	65% (N = 22/34)	67% (N = 90/135)
Female Students – Feminist (Dictionary)	89% (N = 16/18)	82% (N = 94/114)	95% (N = 41/43)	97% (N = 36/37)	88% (N = 187/212)
Gender Difference (Dictionary)	22%	11%	31%	32%	21%
Trans Students -- Feminist	N = 1 (MTF) (*Note: included in female data)	N = 0	N = 0	N = 1 (MTF)	N = 2
Trans Students – Not-Feminist	N = 0	N = 1 (*Note: did not specify if FTM or MTF)	N = 0	N = 0	N = 1

Tables 2.A, 2.B, 2.C – These tables reports findings for the Section: iv. Comparison by Age.

Table 2.A

Age	Feminist	Not-Feminist
18 (highest)	62%	38%
19 (lowest)	50.5%	49.5%
20	53%	47%
21	57%	43%
22	61%	39%
23-29	53%	47%

*Note: These figures represent responses to **open-ended** surveys.

Table 2.B

Age	Feminist	Not-Feminist
18	76%	24%
19 (highest)	83%	17%
20	70%	30%
21 (lowest)	66%	34%
22 (lowest)	66%	34%
23-29	82.5%	17.5%

*Note: These figures represent responses to surveys that employed a dictionary **definition** of feminism.

Table 2.C

Age	Increase when defined
18	14%
19	32.5%
20	17%
21	9%
22 (lowest)	5%
23-29 (highest)	29.5%

*Note: These figures represent % increase in feminist identification from open-ended to dictionary-defined feminism in surveys.

Table 3 – This table reports findings for the Section: v. Comparison by Region.

Table 3

Region	Feminist (open-ended)	Feminist (dictionary)	Not-Feminist (open-ended)	Not-Feminist (dictionary)
Northeast (45%)	48%	84%	52%	16%
Southeast (39%)	52%	75%	48%	25%
Midwest (5%)	62%	82%	38%	18%
West (11%)	78%	79%	22%	21%

Tables 4.A, 4.B – These tables report findings for the Section: vi. Comparison by Athlete Status.

Table 4.A

Feminist	Athletes (N = 238)	Non-Athletes (N = 233)
Yes	56%	73%
No	42%	27%

Table 4.B

Male Athletes (Open-ended) – Feminist	Male Non-Athletes (Open-ended) -- Feminist	Female Athletes (Open-ended) -- Feminist	Female Non-Athletes (Open-ended) -- Feminist
33%	52%	75%	77%
Male Athletes (dictionary) – Feminist	Male Non-Athletes (dictionary) – Feminist	Female Athletes (dictionary) – Feminist	Female Non-Athletes (dictionary) -- Feminist
61%	82%	90%	91%

Tables 5.A, 5.B – These tables report findings for the Section: vii. Comparison by SSC Membership.

Table 5.A

	N	% of Sub-sample
Sub-sample	449	
Females	245	54%
Males	204	45%
Female SSC	62	25%
Male SSC	29	14%

*Note: Females includes 2 MTF transgender respondents.

Table 5.B

	Elite Male	Elite Male SSCs	% Difference
Feminist (open-ended)	46%	43%	3% lower
	Elite Female	Elite Female SSCs	% Difference
Feminist (open-ended)	88%	94%	6% higher

Table 6 – This table reports findings for the Section: viii. Feminism as Social Identity.

Table 6

SI (N = 449)						
Feminist as Y/N	Aggregate			Feminist as Social Identity	Aggregate	
Yes	65%			Yes	39%	
No	35%			No	61%	
Feminist as Y/N	Open-ended	Dictionary		Feminist as Social Identity	Open-ended	Dictionary
Yes	63%	67%		Aggregate	41%	36%
No	37%	33%		Yes to Feminist	64%	53%

Findings from Survey Research -- Discussion

ii. Findings – General

Overall Findings

--We see in Table 1 that responses to feminist identification varied by gender, by institution, and also by how the question was framed.

--Overall, female respondents were more likely to identify as feminist than male respondents.

--Overall, respondents from elite universities were more likely to identify as feminist than respondents from public universities.

--Overall, respondents were more likely to identify as feminist when provided a dictionary definition of the word compared to when the term was left open-ended.

--Overall, male respondents were more impacted than female respondents by providing a definition of feminism.

--Overall, respondents from public schools were more impacted by providing a definition of feminism than respondents from elite schools.

Open-ended Findings

--When asked to define a feminist, 44% of students stated that feminists are activists, 21% described feminists as extremists, 11% described feminists as anti-male, and 10% of students stated that feminists are women. These numbers are not mutually exclusive.

--When comparing only the results from open-ended surveys, 53% of respondents identified as feminist, while 47% did not.

--When not provided a definition, 26% of male respondents identified as feminist. In contrast, 68% of female respondents identified as feminist. Thus, we see a gender gap of 42% among the entire sample.

--When looking at data from open-ended surveys, 32% - 46% of respondents from public schools identified as feminist. In contrast, 70% - 82% of respondents from elite schools identified as feminist. Thus, we see a gap of 24% - 50% between public and private school students relative to feminist identification.

Dictionary-Defined Findings

--When looking only at the data from dictionary-defined surveys, 80% of respondents identified as feminist, while 20% did not. Thus, we see an increase of 26% in willingness to identify with feminism compared to when the question was asked in an open-ended format.

--When provided a basic definition of feminism, 67% of male respondents identified as feminist. In contrast, 88% of female respondents identified as feminist. Thus, we see a gender gap of 21% among the entire population. Notably, the gender gap narrows by 21% when a definition is available. Male respondents were 41% more likely to identify with feminism and female respondents were 20% more likely to identify with feminism when a definition was provided.

--When a definition was given, 77% - 79% of public school respondents and 80% - 82% of private school respondents identified as feminist. Thus, we see the gap narrow to only 1% - 5% between public and private school students relative to feminist identification.

iii. Findings – Gender Comparison

Overall Findings

--Overall, 44% - 88% of females identified with feminism in open-ended surveys and between 82% - 97% identified with feminism when provided a definition.

--Overall, 22% - 46% of males identified with feminism in open-ended surveys and between 64% - 71% identified with feminism when provided a definition.

--Overall, female respondents identified with feminism at higher rates than male respondents whether or not a definition of feminism was provided. The gender gap was between 21% - 43% for open-ended surveys and between 11% - 32% when a definition of feminism was provided.

--When looking only at results from open-ended surveys, the majority of men (54% - 78%) at all four schools did not consider themselves feminist.

--However, when provided a basic definition of feminism, these numbers flip-flopped. When looking only at results from dictionary-defined surveys, the majority of men (64% - 71%) did consider themselves feminist. We see from these results that it matters a great deal how the question is framed.

Open-ended Findings

--When not provided a definition of feminism, the majority of female students at three of the four schools identified with feminism, at rates between 56% (Jackson) and 88% (Whitney). Women who identified with feminism at Acorn were in the minority not only among the mixed-gender population, but also among their female peers, with only 44% reporting identification with feminism. Notably, elite female respondents identified with feminism by a rate 31% - 44% greater than their state counterparts in this context.

Dictionary-Defined Findings

--Overall, providing a definition of feminism made a greater impact on male respondents than it did on female respondents at three of the four schools in this study. The one exception was Acorn, where both male and female students were 45% more likely to identify with feminism when a definition was provided. At the other three schools, providing a definition had a greater impact on males' willingness to call themselves feminists by between 10% - 11% when compared to the impact on females.

--When a definition was provided, female students at all four schools overwhelmingly identified with feminism, at rates between 82% (Jackson) and 97% (Whitney). When provided a definition, 95% - 97% of women at elite schools and 82% - 89% of women at public schools considered themselves feminist. Notably, elite female respondents identified with feminism by a rate 6% - 15% greater than their state counterparts in this context.

--When a definition was provided, male students at all four schools strongly identified with feminism, at rates between 64% (Legacy) and 71% (Jackson). When provided a definition, 64% - 65% of men at elite schools and 67% - 71% of men at public schools considered themselves feminist. Notably, males at public institutions identified with feminism at a rate 2% - 7% greater than their elite counterparts in this context.

iv. Findings – Comparison by Gender and Elite/Public Institutions

Overall Findings

--Overall, providing a definition of feminism made a greater impact on respondents at public schools than it did on respondents at elite schools in this study.

--Overall, providing a definition of feminism made a greater impact on female respondents at public schools than it did on female respondents at elite schools in this study. In open-ended

surveys, female respondents at public schools were much less likely to identify with feminism (by 26% - 45%), while female respondents at elite schools were only slightly less likely to call themselves feminists (by 8% - 9%), in comparison to when a definition of feminism was provided. Thus, we see a gap of 17% - 37% between women at public versus private schools relative to the impact of defining feminism.

--While female respondents reported higher rates of identification with feminism at all four schools, the gender gap was wider at the elite schools, with females reporting identification with feminism at rates between 31% - 32% (when definition provided) and 41% - 43% (on open-ended surveys) greater than their male counterparts. In contrast, females at the state schools reported identification with feminism at rates between 11% - 22% (when definition provided) and 21% - 22% (on open-ended surveys) greater than their male counterparts.

--Overall, providing a definition of feminism made a greater impact on male respondents at public schools than it did on male respondents at elite schools in this study. In open-ended surveys, male respondents from public schools were much less likely to identify with feminism (by 36% - 45%), while male respondents from elite schools were only somewhat less likely to call themselves feminists (by 18% - 20%), in comparison to when a definition of feminism was provided. Thus, we see a gap of 16% - 27% between men at public versus private schools relative to the impact of defining feminism.

--Despite the gender gap being wider at the elite schools in this study, male respondents from elite institutions were more likely to call themselves feminists in open-ended surveys than their state school counterparts. In this context, men at public schools reported identification with feminism at a rate of 22% - 35% in comparison to 45% - 46% of men at elite schools. When looking only

at results from open-ended surveys, males at elite institutions were 10% - 24% more likely to call themselves feminists than males at public institutions.

Key Findings

One of the key findings here is that there is a gender gap in identification with feminism regardless of how the question is framed. On open-ended surveys the gender gap ranged from between 21% - 22% at the state schools and between 41% - 43% at the elite schools. When a definition was provided, the gender gap shrunk to 11% at Jackson, remained stagnant at 22% at Acorn, and shrunk to 31% - 32% at the elite schools.

Another key finding in looking at gender as it relates to feminist identification is that the majority of female respondents at elite schools identified with feminism whether or not a definition was given. This was also the case for female respondents at Jackson. In contrast, the majority of female respondents at Acorn did not identify with feminism in an open-ended format. We know that gender intersects with other social factors such as class and race. Here, we see that gender intersects with the culture of the institution.

At Jackson, women outnumber men by 2:1. Further, the school's history as a women's college impacts the overall culture of the university. Even though the men at Jackson had a low rate of feminist identification in an open-ended format (35%), when provided a definition, they actually reported the highest rate of feminist identification (71%) among males at any of the four schools in this sample. Thus, 65% of males and 44% of females are hesitant to call themselves feminist in an open-ended format at Jackson. Yet, when a definition is offered, only 29% of males and 18% of females say they are not feminist. The contrast based on how the question is asked indicates that there is indeed a stigma attached to feminism at Jackson.

Males at elite universities reported slightly higher rates of feminist identification (by 1% - 2%) on open-ended surveys than females at Acorn. Yet when a definition was provided, females at Acorn reported a higher rate of feminist identification than males at elite schools by 24% - 25%. Given that both males and females at elite schools reported higher rates of feminist identification than their public school counterparts on open-ended surveys, and also that they were impacted less by a definition of feminism being provided, I conclude that feminism is less stigmatized at elite schools than at public schools.

At Acorn, males were much less likely to identify with feminism than their elite counterparts in an open-ended format (by 23% - 24%). Yet when a definition was provided, they were actually slightly more likely (by 2% - 3%) to identify with feminism than elite males. Further, both males and females at Acorn were strongly impacted by a definition being provided (by 45%, much more so than females at any of the other schools and also more so than males at any of the other schools). Based on these results, combined with my qualitative research, I conclude that feminism was the most stigmatized at Acorn at the time of this study.

v. Findings – Comparison by Age

Overall Findings

--Overall, the majority of respondents of all ages (18-29) identified as feminist in both open-ended (50.5% - 62%) and dictionary-defined (66% - 83%) surveys.

--Overall, respondents of all ages were more likely to call themselves feminists when provided a basic definition of the term.

--Overall, providing a definition of feminism made the greatest impact on respondents who were 19 years of age than it did on respondents in the other age groups in this study. This age group

was 32.5% more likely to identify with feminism when given a definition. Respondents ages 23-29 were also strikingly more likely to identify with feminism when a definition was given, by 29.5%.

--Overall, providing a definition of feminism made the least impact on respondents who were 22 years of age. This age group was only 5% more likely to identify with feminism when given a definition. Respondents who were 21 years of age were only 9% more likely to identify with feminism when provided a definition.

--In contrast, providing a definition of feminism made a moderate impact on respondents who were either 18 or 20 years of age, by 14% and 17% respectively.

Open-ended Findings

--When looking only at results from open-ended surveys, the age group most likely to call themselves feminist were 18 year-olds, with a rate of 62%.

--When looking only at results from open-ended surveys, the age group least likely to call themselves feminist were 19 year-olds, with a rate of 50.5%.

Dictionary-Defined Findings

--When a definition was provided, students of all ages strongly identified with feminism, at rates between 66% (ages 21-22) and 83% (age 19).

--When provided a definition, 70% of 20-year olds, 76% of 18-year olds, and 82.5% of 23-29 year-olds identified as feminist. Notably, respondents ages 23-29 had the second-highest rate of feminist identification, after 19 year-olds. This group is generally thought of as “nontraditional”

students, as the “traditional” trajectory for college students is to enter at age 18 and graduate at age 22.

--Notably, respondents who were 19 years of age were simultaneously the most likely to consider themselves feminist when provided a definition, and the least likely to consider themselves feminist when not given a definition in comparison to respondents of other ages in this study.

Key Findings

When looking only at the results of open-ended surveys, it struck me that students age 18 (incoming freshmen) were the most likely to call themselves feminist. Yet, respondents only one year older (age 19) were the least likely to call themselves feminists, after a year of exposure to college life. When we look at Table 2.A, which breaks down responses to open-ended surveys by age, we see that students identify with feminism most strongly as incoming freshman. One year later, they are 11.5% *less likely* to identify with feminism in an open-ended format. After that, students’ willingness to call themselves feminist slowly increases with each year, from 53% at age 20 to 61% at age 22. Notably, their rate of feminist identification at age 22 reaches a rate 1% lower than the rate of feminist identification among 18 year-olds. In other words, incoming freshman have higher rates of feminist identification than sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Feminist identification drops between freshman and sophomore year, then steadily increases as students progress through college. However, this pattern applies only for open-ended surveys and only for “traditional” students.

In contrast, when looking at the results of dictionary-defined surveys, we see that 19 year-olds in fact have the highest level of feminist identification, at a rate of 83% compared to 76% of 18 year-olds. This means that they are 7% *more likely* to identify with feminism after a year of

exposure to college life, when provided a definition of feminism. How can they simultaneously be more and less feminist at 19 than at 18?

Based on my interviews with students, I believe the answer is that most students do support gender equality in a philosophical sense. This is evidenced by the higher rates of feminist identification across the board when students are offered a basic definition of the word. Yet the process of socialization that students go through in making the adjustment to college life has a strong impact on many facets of their social identity. What I heard from a number of students was that they felt strong pressures to conform at college, especially in their first two years. I also heard from the majority of students that they felt the word “feminism” had been stigmatized and that it was associated with extremism. Thus, incoming students who support the idea of gender equality and have not yet been exposed to the stigmatization of feminism in college culture are more likely to identify with feminism in open-ended surveys at age 18 than they are a year later, once they have learned that feminism is “not cool” in collegiate settings. At the same time most are eager to fit in to that culture, and there is strong pressure to conform to the social norms of college life. Here, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) is useful, which asserts that a group must be perceived as positive in order for a person to identify with that group. This helps explain why college students who state a belief in gender equality do not identify with the “feminist” label.

Interestingly, at age 19, students are the most likely to identify with feminism as a concept of basic equality than at any other time in their college years. I believe this is because they are absorbing the shock of exposure to some of the very things that discourage them from outwardly associating with feminism such as hegemonic masculinity, hookup culture, fraternity parties, and effortless perfectionism. Many students are also learning about gender inequality through their coursework and are dismayed to learn about realities such as the wage gap and workplace

discrimination. Thus, they have strong beliefs and feelings that support gender equality coupled with strong social pressures to disassociate themselves with feminism.

vi. Findings – Comparison by Region

Overall Findings

--Overall, the majority of respondents from three out of four U.S. regions identified as feminist in open-ended (52% - 78%) surveys. The one exception was the Northeast at 48%.

--Overall, the majority of respondents from all four regions of the U.S. identified as feminist in dictionary-defined (75% - 84%) surveys.

--Overall, respondents from all four regions in this study were more likely to call themselves feminists when provided a basic definition of the term.

--Overall, providing a definition of feminism made a greater impact on respondents who were from the Northeast than it did on respondents from the other regions of the U.S. in this study. This group was 36% more likely to identify with feminism when provided a definition.

--Overall, providing a definition of feminism made the least impact on respondents who were from Western states. This group was only 1% more likely to identify with feminism when given a definition.

--In contrast, providing a definition of feminism made a moderate impact on respondents who were either from the Midwest or the Southeast, by 20% and 23% respectively.

Open-ended Findings

--When comparing responses to the open-ended survey, the Northeast (48%) and Southeast (52%) had relatively similar responses, with Southern students reporting slightly higher rates of feminist identification (by 4%).

--When comparing responses to the open-ended survey, we see that students from the West (78%) and the Midwest (62%) were 10% - 30% more likely to identify with feminism than students from either the Northern or Southern regions of the Eastern U.S.

--When looking only at responses to open-ended survey, students from the West had by far the highest rates of feminist identification at 78%.

Dictionary-Defined Findings

--When a definition was provided, students from the Northeast reported higher rates of feminist identification than students from the Southeast by 9%.

--When looking only at responses to the surveys employing a dictionary definition of feminism, students from the Northeast reported the highest rates of feminist identification at 84%, and students from the Southeast scored the lowest at 75%. Thus, students from the Northeast identified with feminism at a rate of 2% more than students from the Midwest, 5% more than students from West, and 9% more than students from the Southeast.

Key Findings

Again, we see that it matters a great deal how the question is framed. When not prompted with a definition of feminism, students from the Northeast were the *least likely* of the four regions to identify with feminism at a rate of 48%. However, when provided a basic definition, this group was actually the *most likely* to identify with feminism at a rate of 84%.

I believe the effect of providing a definition of feminism is that it removes the stigma that students reported was attached to feminism. In the absence of a definition, a large swath of respondents were hesitant to call themselves feminists due to its negative connotation and association with extremism. In addition to the stigma attached to it, the word “feminist” was also associated with activism among a large number of respondents. Some students who supported the idea of gender equality did not consider themselves activists in the arena of gender issues, and therefore did not call themselves feminists in open-ended surveys. Thus, when feminism was defined as a belief system rooted in equality, a larger group of people answered that they considered themselves feminist compared to when the term was left open-ended.

Therefore, if one aims to find out how many people support the idea of gender equality, the dictionary-defined survey offers a more accurate portrayal. What we capture by framing the question this way is how many people agree with the idea that men and women are inherently equal and deserve equal rights. The survey results indicate that a large number of people agree with gender equality in theory but do not incorporate feminism into their social identity. Providing a definition also better captures how many people are truly not feminist and likely hold anti-feminist beliefs.

In contrast, if one aims to find out how many people strongly support gender equality or incorporate feminism into their social identity, the open-ended survey offers a more accurate snapshot of this landscape. What we learn by framing the question this way is how respondents define feminism for themselves and/or why they do or don’t consider themselves feminist.

Given this contrast, the results from a regional comparison of the survey data indicate that between 16% (in the Northeast) and 25% (in the Southeast) of college students are truly not feminist or hold anti-feminist beliefs. Further, between 22% (in the West) and 52% (in the

Northeast) of college students are hesitant to call themselves feminist for a variety of reasons (e.g. stigmatization, association with activism, association with women, not a primary marker of social identity).

On the other hand, we see that college students overwhelmingly associated with feminism when provided a definition, between 75% - 84%, and that the majority of students in three out of the four regions considered themselves feminist in an open-ended format. Further, there was relatively little difference in feminist association for students from the West based on how the question was framed, likely indicating less stigmatization of feminism in these states than in the other regions of the U.S.

vii. Findings – Comparison by Athlete Status

Overall Findings

--Overall, the majority of non-athletes identified as feminist in both open-ended (52% of males and 77% of females) and dictionary-defined (82% of males and 91% of females) surveys.

--Overall, the majority of female athletes identified as feminist in both open-ended (75%) and dictionary-defined (91%) surveys.

--Overall, only one-third (33%) of male athletes identified as feminist in open-ended surveys. In contrast, the majority of male athletes (61%) did identify as feminist in dictionary-defined surveys.

--Overall, respondents were more likely to call themselves feminist when provided a basic definition of the term regardless of gender or athlete status.

--Overall, providing a definition of feminism made a greater impact on male respondents than it did on female respondents by 13% - 16%. Males were 28% (athletes) to 30% (non-athletes) more likely to identify with feminism when offered a definition.

--In contrast, females were 14% (non-athletes) to 15% (athletes) more likely to identify with feminism when a definition was provided.

--Male athletes were less likely to identify with feminism than their non-athlete male counterparts by 19% in open-ended surveys (33% vs. 52%) and by 21% (61% vs. 82%) when provided a dictionary definition.

Open-ended Findings

--When looking only at results from open-ended surveys, the group most likely to call themselves feminist were female non-athletes, with a rate of 77%.

--When looking only at results from open-ended surveys, the group least likely to call themselves feminist were male athletes, with a rate of 33%.

--When looking at data from open-ended surveys, female athletes reported feminist identification at a whopping 42% higher rate than male athletes (75% vs. 33%).

--When not provided a definition of feminism, the majority of male athletes (67%) did not consider themselves feminists.

Dictionary-Defined Findings

--When a definition was provided, students of both genders strongly identified with feminism, at rates between 61% (male athletes) and 91% (female non-athletes).

--When provided a definition of feminism, the majority of male athletes (61%) aligned themselves with feminism, but to a lesser extent (by 29%) than their female athlete counterparts, 90% of whom considered themselves feminist when provided a basic definition of the term.

--When provided a basic definition, the rate of feminist identification increased by 28% (from 33% to 61%) for male athletes.

Key Findings

In considering ideological support for gender equality, the majority of students in this subsample (N = 471) identified with feminism when given a basic definition of the term (61% of male athletes, 81% of non-athlete males, 90% of female athletes, and 91% of non-athlete females). Here we see that among athletes, females were 29% more likely than males to identify with feminism. In contrast, among non-athletes, females were only 9% more likely than males to identify with feminism. Thus, the gender gap is 20% wider among athletes than it is among non-athletes relative to identification with feminism.

When looking only at responses to the dictionary-defined survey, male athletes reported lower rates of feminist identification than the general population of men at large or individually at any of the four schools in this study. In comparison to the 67% of the general male population who identified as feminist in the dictionary-defined survey, male athletes' rate of 61% feminist identification is lower by 6%. This rate is also lower than the rate of feminist identification among males at any of the four schools (by 3% compared to Legacy, by 4% compared to Whitney, by 6% compared to Acorn, and by 10% compared to Jackson).

In considering feminism as a social identity, males were much less likely than females to self-identify with feminism in an open-ended format. Among athletes, males were 42% less likely than females to call themselves feminist. Among non-athletes, males were 25% less likely than females to call themselves feminist.

Notably, the majority of female athletes self-identified as feminist, with or without a definition being offered. When provided a basic definition, the rate of feminist identification increased by 15% (from 75% to 90%) for female athletes.

When asked in an open-ended format, only one third (33%) of male athletes thought of themselves as feminist, compared to one half (52%) of males who did not self-identify as athletes. Thus, when males identified as “athletes,” they were 19% less likely to identify as “feminist” than their non-athlete counterparts.

In contrast to males, there appears to be little difference between female athletes and their non-athlete female counterparts relative to self-identification with feminism. Female non-athletes were only 1-2% more likely to identify with feminism than female athletes.

The key finding here is that the social identity “athlete” corresponds with lower identification with feminism as a social identity for males, but not for females. In other words, there is an intersectional relationship between gender and the social identity “athlete.”

viii. Findings – Comparison by Membership in SSCs (Selective Social Clubs)

*Note: I found that SSC membership was much more common at the elite schools than the public schools in this study. Among this sub-sample (N = 449) of respondents who reported various markers of social identity, 20% indicated that they were members of SSCs (N = 91). Of those who identified themselves as SSC members, 78% attended elite schools and only 22% attended public

schools. Among female SSC members, 77% were from elite schools and among male SSC members, 79% hailed from elite institutions. In order to compare apples with apples and oranges with oranges, I needed to parcel out the responses from elite SSC members vs. public SSC members. Since the Ns are so small when broken down by Elite vs. Public in looking at SSC membership, I did not have enough data from public school respondents to conduct a comparative analysis. Therefore, these findings reflect only the data collected from open-ended surveys among Elite students who self-identified as belonging to SSCs (N = 55). Further research is needed in order to draw any definite conclusions regarding trends of feminist self-identification among SSC students. I therefore look at the findings in this section as “food for thought” or preliminary findings. I do not dismiss them outright, nor do I place a great deal of stock in the outcomes given the small sample size.

Open-ended Findings

--Overall, less than half (43%) of males in SSCs identified as feminist in open-ended surveys. In contrast, 57% of males in SSCs did not identify as feminist.

--Overall, the vast majority (94%) of females in SSCs identified as feminist in open-ended surveys. In contrast, only 6% of female SSC members did not identify as feminist.

--There is a gender gap here of 51% between male and female SSC members relative to feminist identification. In contrast, the gender gap between male and female respondents in the elite population at large is between 41% - 43%. Thus, the gender gap is 8% - 10% wider among SSC members than it is for the overall elite population.

--When looking only at responses to the open-ended survey, male SSC members had slightly lower rates of support for feminism (43%) in comparison to the elite male population at large (46%).

This rate of 3% does not seem significant enough to draw any conclusions. Further research targeting SSC members and employing a dictionary definition of feminism may yield more insightful data.

--When looking only at responses to the open-ended survey, female SSC members had slightly higher rates of feminist identification (94%) than the elite female population at large (88%). This rate of 6% is large enough to raise an eyebrow. Again, further research targeting SSC members and employing a dictionary definition of feminism may yield more conclusive data.

Key Findings

What struck me in looking at the data from these surveys was that male SSC members were slightly less likely to identify with feminism than the elite male population in general, while female SSC members were slightly more likely to identify with feminism than the elite female population in general. Since I did not have the opportunity to conduct follow-up interviews with SSC members to ask questions specifically addressing their views and experiences relative to feminism and SSC life, I cannot explain this trend. This is an area for future research.

However, I suspect there is an intersectional relationship between gender and the social identity “SSC member.” In my qualitative research, I found that SSCs played a large role in the social life and in “hookup culture” at the elite schools. Because these environments are infused with hegemonic masculinity, and because research has found that women in sororities are at high risk of sexual assault, it is likely that female SSC members at elite schools push back against their experiences in these environments by embracing feminism, while their male counterparts resist it, both at slightly higher rates than the elite population in general.

ix. Findings – Feminism as Social Identity

Overall Findings

--From a sub-sample (N = 449) that looked at markers of social identity, 39% of respondents considered “feminist” to be one of their social identities, while 61% did not.

--From this sub-sample (N = 449), when asked if they considered themselves to be feminist in a Yes/No format, 65% said Yes and 35% said No.

--Among the 65% of respondents who identified as feminist in a Yes/No format, 60% also identified with feminism as a social identity, while 40% did not.

Open-ended Findings

--In this sub-sample, 63% of respondents identified as feminist in an open-ended format, while 37% did not.

--When the term feminism was left open-ended, 41% of respondents overall and 64% of those who responded “Yes” to feminist in a Yes/No format also identified with feminism as a social identity.

Dictionary-Defined Findings

--In this sub-sample, 67% of respondents identified as feminist when provided a definition, while 33% did not.

--When a definition of feminism was provided, 36% of respondents overall and 53% of those who responded “Yes” to feminist in a Yes/No format also identified with feminism as a social identity.

Key Findings

We see here that like other ideologies and social identities, feminism runs along a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum are people who hold anti-feminist beliefs and on the other end of the spectrum are people who strongly embrace gender equality and identify as feminist activists. These results indicate that about two-thirds (67%) of respondents identified with feminism as a basic concept of equality. In contrast, slightly more than one-third (39%) of respondents incorporated feminism into their personal social identity. Thus, we see a gap of 28% between identification with feminism as a concept of equality and identification with feminism as a marker of social identity among college students. In other words, for every ten college students roughly 2 - 3 are not feminist, 3 - 4 are moderately feminist, and 4 are strongly feminist.

Summary of Key Findings

One of the key findings of this study was that the definition gap in identification with feminism is largely attributable to four sets of beliefs: (1) the belief that feminists are activists (44% of students in open-ended surveys held this view); (2) the belief that feminists are extremists (21% of students in open-ended surveys held this view); (3) the belief that feminists are anti-male (11% of students in open-ended surveys held this view); and (4) the belief that only women can be feminists (10% of students in open-ended surveys held this view).

Another key finding was that providing a definition of feminism narrowed the gender gap between male and female students' propensity to self-identify as feminist by 13%. Further, providing a definition of feminism differently impacted students from public and private institutions. In open-ended surveys, the gender gap in feminist identification was between 21 - 22% at public schools and between 41 - 43% at elite schools. I found that students from elite

universities, both male and female, were more likely to identify with feminism in an open-ended format. When a definition was provided, males from public universities were 5% more likely to identify as feminist than their elite male counterparts. In contrast, females from elite universities were 13% more likely to identify as feminist than their public-school female counterparts. In addition to gender and institutional affiliation, other social factors including age, regional origin, and athlete status impacted students' likelihood to identify with feminism.

With regard to age, providing a definition of feminism impacted students differently. It made the biggest difference (by 32.5%) for students who were 19 years of age (likely in their sophomore year of college) and the least difference (by 5%) for students who were 22 years of age (likely in their senior year of college). I found that the youngest students, 18 year-olds, were most likely to identify as feminist in open-ended surveys, and that the rate of feminist identification dropped by 11.5% among students age 19, after a year of exposure to college life. Yet, when a definition of feminism was available, 19 year-olds had the highest rate of feminist-identification, while 21-22 year-olds had the lowest. Nontraditional students (ages 23-29) were also greatly impacted by the availability of a definition in survey research, with a 29.5% increase in feminist identification.

Likewise, the findings from the regional comparison indicate that providing a definition of feminism differently impacted students from different areas of the country. Students from the Northeast were the most influenced by a definition being given (by 36%), with a moderate impact on students from the Southeast (23%) and the Midwest (20%), and a negligible impact on students from the West (1%). However, one of the key takeaways from this research is that when surveying students in an open-ended format (a more accurate measure of feminism as a social identity), students from the Northeast were not more likely to align themselves with feminism than students

from the Southeast. In fact, 52% of students from the Southeast identified with feminism compared to 48% of students from the Northeast in an open-ended format.

Finally, the social identity of “athlete” intersected with gender relative to feminist identification. In a sub-sample that also asked students if they identified as athletes, I found that male athletes were 42% less likely than female athletes and 19% less likely than male non-athletes to identify as feminist in an open-ended format. When provided a definition, male athletes reported lower rates of feminist identification than the general population of men at large or individually at any of the four schools in this study. In comparison to the 67% of the general male population who identified as feminist in the dictionary-defined survey, male athletes’ rate of 61% feminist identification was lower by 6%. This rate is also lower than the rate of feminist identification among males at any of the four schools (by 3% compared to Legacy, by 4% compared to Whitney, by 6% compared to Acorn, and by 10% compared to Jackson). One of the key takeaways here was that athlete status decreased the likelihood of feminist identification for males, but not for females.

Chapter One: “The Feminization of the Work-Family Conflict”

Literature Review: Gender and the Workplace

One of the primary goals of second-wave feminism was the full equality of women in the workplace. Whether out of economic necessity or personal ambition, women’s participation in the paid labor force has increased dramatically since the postwar era. Following WWII, women’s labor force participation dropped off, as many women were fired from their jobs in order to make room for men coming home from the war. During the war, about 40% of women were employed outside the home, while after the war this figure fell to about 30%. Indeed, the decade following WWII (1946-1955) gave rise to the “Baby Boom” and a domestic ideal of the nuclear family with a male breadwinner/female homemaker model, also known as the “traditional” model. This family model peaked in 1950, with 59.4% of American households fitting the “traditional” model, compared with 47% in 1965, 30.3% in 1980, and only 13% in 2006 (Hochschild, 2012). By 2011, 59% of American women were in the labor force, up from 30% in 1950 (Ibid). The percentage of married women with children in the labor force has also increased dramatically, from 39.7% in 1970 to 70.1% in 1999 (Freedman, 2002). While marriage impacted women’s likelihood of participating in the paid labor force in the postwar era, this factor decreased in significance by about 10% per decade from 1950-1980. In 1950, only 21.6% of married women were in the labor force, compared with 49.9% of married women by 1980 (Cohen and Bianchi, 1999). By 1999, marriage in itself had relatively little effect on women’s labor force participation, although access to other income (e.g. spouse’s earnings) continued to exert a downward pressure on women’s allocation of time to paid work (Ibid).

In 2008, the Institute for Women's Policy Research issued a report entitled, "Still A Man's Labor Market: The Long-Term Earnings Gap," based on research by Stephen Rose and Heidi Hartmann. The report indicated that the wage gap between men and women had narrowed by more than one-third since 1960, when women earned 59 cents for every dollar earned by a man. In 2008, women earned 77 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts, a measure capturing only those workers employed full-time year round (Rose and Hartmann, 2008). While much research on pay inequity tends to focus on annual earnings, Rose and Hartmann studied the impact of the wage gap for long-term earnings. They found that over a fifteen-year period, women earned an average of \$273,592 compared to average male earnings of \$722,693, leaving a gap of 62 percent over the fifteen-year period. Further, they found that 90 percent of those who average less than \$15,000 per year are women. To investigate the cause of such wage disparities Rose and Hartmann explored sex segregation in the labor market by dividing jobs into three distinct clusters: (1) elite jobs, (2) good jobs, and (3) less-skilled jobs. Within each cluster occupations were further classified as either male-dominated or female-dominated (an occupation had to be filled by 75% or more of one gender to be considered male or female-dominated). Examples of elite female-dominated jobs included teachers and nurses, while elite male-dominated jobs included business executives, scientists, doctors, and lawyers. Their research indicated that within each of the three clusters, women's jobs paid significantly less than their male counterparts, despite the fact that both required the same amount of formal education. Measured in 1999 dollars, the elite male jobs paid an average of \$74,877 compared to \$51,085 for the elite female jobs. Rose and Hartmann concluded that, despite significant progress since 1960, at the current rate of change it would take another fifty years to close the pay gap without the development of policy interventions.

A number of scholars have noted a plateau in women's labor force participation by the year 2000 (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman, 2004; Bianchi, Casper, and King, 2005; Lee and Mather, 2008). In fact, gender inequality in the labor market as measured by labor force participation, occupational sex segregation,⁶ and the gender earnings gap remained stable or worsened in the 1990s compared to the previous decades since mid-century (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman, 2004). While women were much more likely to be engaged in market work in 1990 (74%) than they were in 1950 (29%), integration of sex-segregated jobs had slowed or even stopped by 2000. Data from the U.S. Census indicates that many occupations remained as heavily segregated by sex in 2000 as they had been in 1950, such as the male-dominated occupations of electrician, plumber, mechanic, or carpenter, and the female-dominated professions of administrative support, nursing, and elementary-school teaching (Ibid). Labor force researchers attribute the decline of job integration in the 1990s to two main sources: (1) less integration of previously segregated jobs (e.g. men becoming nurses) and (2) slowing growth of already integrated occupations (e.g. growth in the number of cooks) or decline of segregated ones (e.g. decline in telephone operators since 1970) (Ibid). While noting the advances made by women in the latter half of the twentieth century, these findings caution that progress is not guaranteed, as evidenced by the persistence of gender inequality in the labor market. American women today are still less likely than men to be engaged in the paid labor force. Further, more than half of women work in jobs that are female-dominated

⁶ Occupational sex segregation is an issue that feminist scholars have linked with concepts such as the "feminization of poverty" and "pink-collar ghettos" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Ehrenreich, 2001; Hays, 2003). Among the first to address the issue of gendered job segregation was Heidi Hartmann in her provocative 1976 essay, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," in which she argued that occupational sex segregation is the primary mechanism by which capitalist societies maintain the superiority of men over women. Hartmann reasoned that "low wages keep women dependent on men because they encourage women to marry." She insisted that job segregation by sex was inextricably linked to culture and that the interaction of patriarchy and capitalism created (and perpetuated) economic and social inequality between the sexes. In line with socialist feminist philosophy, Hartmann argued that, "If women are to be free, they must fight against both patriarchal power and capitalist organization of society." (Hartmann, 1976)

and, despite a narrowing of the pay gap since 1950, women still make less money than their male counterparts, even for performing the same duties (Ibid).

Lee and Mather (2008) offer several theories for the apparent standstill: (1) some married women may have opted out of the labor force due to men's increased incomes during a period of economic growth in the 1990s, (2) the slowing economy since 2000 weakened demand for labor, thus curtailing women's access to jobs, and (3) women's ability to balance the responsibilities of the paid labor force and their domestic duties may have reached a limit. With regard to the issue of "opting out" of the labor force, this is a matter of some complexity, which Pamela Stone discussed in her provocative book, *Opting Out?: Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home* (2007), in which she argued that structural factors are as much at play in pushing mothers out of the workforce as are the pulls of domesticity. Among the structural factors that pushed high-achieving women out of the workforce and into full-time homemaking roles were lack of employer support for job-sharing programs and part-time work options. Some women were turned down by their supervisors when they inquired about these options, while others were granted part-time work but eventually quit due to "mommy tracking" (the more interesting and important assignments were given to full-time employees). The second reason put forth by Lee and Mather for the plateau in women's labor force participation, that of the slowing economy in the twenty-first century, is directly bound up with globalization, an issue that impacts not only American women but women around the globe, particularly those in developing countries such as China, Mexico, and India. Finally, with regard to women's ability to juggle paid market work with unpaid domestic work, this remains a challenge for working parents today, and it is the theme that was most often repeated in my interviews with female college students.

Findings

Both male and female students cited the gender gap in pay as an important issue for the 21st century feminist movement to resolve. Female students also frequently cited structural factors in the workplace reflecting gender bias as obstacles to be overcome for their generation. In addition to the wage gap, female students cited gender discrimination in hiring practices, glass ceilings, and “mommy-tracking” as workplace issues that they had some awareness of and feared they might encounter in their own lives. Many students cited the European model as one that they hoped the U.S. would emulate with regard to paid family leave and other policies to support dual-earner families. I found that female students experienced a great deal more gender-role conflict than their male counterparts with regard to career and family aspirations. They were much more likely to have already spent a significant amount of time considering whether or not they would like to have children and whether their intended career path would conflict with their future roles as parents.

N = 53 (All students who want children) = 84%

Table 7. Gender Ideology Among Students who want Children

N = 39 (Female students who want children)	N = 14 (Male students who want children)
88.6 % of cis-females and 84.7% of all females	87.5% of hetero-males and 82% of all males
Egalitarian = 72% (N = 28)	Egalitarian = 64% (N = 9)
Transitional = 26% (N = 10)	Transitional = 21% (N = 3)
Traditional = 2% (N = 1)	Traditional = 14% (N = 2)

As the figures in Table 7 show, 84% of all the students in my sample stated that they would like to have children in the future. Nearly 89% of cis-female students said they want to have children,

while 82% of cis-male students stated they would.⁷ Of the students who expressed a desire to become parents, 72% of females and 64% of males identified with an Egalitarian gender ideology; while 26% of females and 21% of males held views in line with a Transitional gender ideology; and only 2% of females and 14% of males held to Traditional gender ideology. If we compare these findings to those of Hochschild (1989), we see a significant shift in men's gender ideology over the last 30 years: an increase of 44% among men who identify with egalitarian gender ideology.⁸

Male Students

None of the male students in my sample reported feeling conflicted between their career goals and the potential of becoming fathers, though three stated that they would like to be able to spend more time with their children than their fathers had been able to spend with them. None of the males planned to become stay-at-home-fathers, nor had they spent any amount of time worrying about how they would manage having children in their future. Instead, they assumed that things would somehow fall into place for them. Male students responded to the subject of balancing work and family in one of four ways:

- (1) *Male Breadwinner Model* – They stated a preference for their future wives to stay home with children, noting pressure to conform to the breadwinner/homemaker model (N = 3);
- (2) *Economic Model of Breadwinner* – They expressed a desire for one of the parents to stay home with children and stated that it should be whoever makes less money (N = 3);
- (3) *Male Breadwinner/Female “Choice” Model* – They stated that they wanted to work and that it would be fine with them either way if their future wives chose to work or stay home with children (N = 4);

⁷ My sample of 63 students includes 2 trans-women, who both stated they do not want to have children. There were no students who identified as trans-men in my sample.

⁸ In her research for *The Second Shift* (1989), conducted between 1980-1988, Arlie Hochschild found that 20% of men embraced egalitarian ideology, 70% embraced transitional gender ideology, and 10% embraced traditional gender ideology.

(4) *Dual-Earner-Dual-Carer Model* – They wanted their future partners to remain in the workforce and planned to be equal partners in raising children (N = 4). Most in this group believed it was important for their wives to have careers of their own (N = 3). One male wanted his future partner to remain in the workforce because he believed his intended career would not provide sufficient income to support a family.

The following excerpts reflect each of the four views expressed by male students in relation to their anticipated work-family model.

Model 1 (Male Breadwinner Model)

This passage reflects the sentiments held by males in category 1, who expressed traditional gender ideology with regard to their roles as breadwinners:

Anthony: I mean for me, I know with my girlfriend, if we were to [get married] whatever, you know, she's in school for her own thing, so I want her to pursue her dreams. You know, life is not to be a slave to someone else. Therefore, pursue your dreams. I'll support you. I'm going to pursue mine also. But at the same time ... basically, I would like to be the person who can support my family.

EM: So you do identify as bearing the responsibility to be the primary breadwinner?

Anthony: Yeah. Absolutely, especially with my background in a Sicilian family, you know, the man is the one.

Model 2 (Economic Model of Breadwinner)

The next passage reflects the views of males in category 2, who expressed a desire for one parent to stay home to raise children. This group clearly had been impacted by the male breadwinner model and seemed to want to replicate that model in their own lives. Yet they left room for the possibility that their future wives might make more money than them, in which case they stated an openness to taking on primary caretaker responsibilities as fathers.

Ben: I definitely want to have kids when I'm older.

EM: You definitely do want kids.

Ben: But I don't know what I would expect after I had kids about having leave from work or whatnot. But I remember there was a teacher in my school ... he had a kid and he took a semester off from working as a teacher so ...

EM: So, if you had children, do you feel that it would be more your responsibility to make money or your equal responsibility with a partner?

Ben: Equal. It just depends on who has the better situation, what works out. I think it's obviously history shows it's been more the man, it's been more men doing the work, but it doesn't mean necessarily that it has to be that way. Like my uncle, he became allergic to the yeast when he worked for this bakery. So his wife started taking over the responsibility at their bakery and he started hanging out with the kids at the house more, and the roles kind of changed in their family.

EM: So, for you, would it depend on who's making more money or does it depend on who enjoys their particular career more? What would be the factors at play there?

Ben: I think that's something you just work out with your spouse, whatever you feel like you're comfortable with. Some people feel like one parent needs to stay home all day with the kids. Another family might feel like they can just get a sitter, a nanny or whatnot. It just really depends on the household and what works for you.

EM: And do you have any personal views on childcare? What would you be comfortable with in terms of having a nanny, taking your children to daycare? Or would you prefer one parent to stay home?

Ben: I probably would prefer one of the parents staying home with my kids just because that's how I had it.

Model 3 (Male Breadwinner/Female "Choice" Model)

This excerpt reflects the views of men in category 3, who felt strongly that they would have careers of their own, and that they would not be willing to perform the role of stay-at-home-parent. They expressed either ambivalence or support for what they perceived to be a woman's choice to remain in the labor force or stay home with children. In contrast to men in category 2, they did not approach the issue of work and family integration from a perspective of partnership or negotiation with their future wives. Rather, they held to traditional notions of a male breadwinner model and combined that with a version of feminism that frames work/family coordination as "her" choice.

EM: Do you see yourself having kids? Is it something that you've thought about?

Michael: Obviously right now it's not something that I want. But down the road I think I definitely want to have a family of my own.

EM: And you mentioned that your mother was a stay-at-home-parent for you and your two sisters. Do you have any thoughts about what kind of family formation you might like to have? And how much is that informed by the model that you were raised with?

Michael: Having a mom, like having a parental figure at home all the time, it was definitely ... I think good. It was definitely beneficial to have somebody around when you would need help. On the other hand, I know a lot of people whose parents both worked when they were growing up and they turned out fine. And I think that also breeds a sense

of individualism and responsibility. You don't have somebody constantly looking over your shoulder to make sure what you are doing is right and stuff like that. I'd be fine either way, honestly. If I was to marry somebody and they decided that they wanted to stay home ... as long as financially we could do that, I'd be fine with that. If my future wife wanted to continue working I'd be totally okay with that too. I think that's—I wouldn't want somebody to limit themselves because of something like that.

Model 4 (Dual-Earner-Dual-Carer Model)

This group of men expressed a desire for their future partners to remain in the workforce and planned to be equal partners in raising children, in line with egalitarian gender ideology. The next passage reflects the views of men in this group who believed it was important for their wives to have careers of their own.

EM: Do you see your career goals as being in any way in conflict with having children?

Joshua: No. I don't think so. I don't plan on having kids until I have finished, I can't say finished with my education because I foresee myself going back to school later on, furthering that ... but until I'm settled, have enough. But once I'm set, once I have my house, when I'm not worrying about things like that, then we can talk about having children.

EM: Do you see you and your wife as both having careers, both raising kids?

Joshua: Yes. Absolutely. Hands down. In my life, I foresee us both having careers because she is ambitious like me. She wants to go places, she want to do things, not necessarily politically. So we are both going to have our careers, be successful financially and I expect us to both love our kids. And so I expect the two of us to put in the same effort in every single ... in every department.

Finally, one male wanted his future partner to remain in the workforce because he believed his intended career would not provide sufficient income to support a family. The following passage reflects this student's view:

Brian: I hope my partner works or wants to work because I don't think I'm going to make enough money to support a family in this state on a teacher's salary. So I think it's good if she has a life and has goals, even if they are within our own family. I think economically it makes sense to have a job. I mean, both my parents worked and I was watched by my grandparents when I got out of school and then my parents would come home around 4:00 or 5:00 and then they would resume normal parent activities. And I think modeling something like that would be a decent idea. I turned out halfway okay, so ...

Female Students

In contrast, the majority (91%) of female students I spoke with expressed feeling conflicted or feeling anxiety about realizing both their career goals and becoming mothers in the future. Notably, only four female students did *not* express feeling conflicted between career and the potential of children in the future: one was a single mother of a toddler, one was lesbian and had not yet given much thought to the idea of children, and the other two were trans-women who did not plan to have children. Thus, 100% of the heterosexual cis-women in my sample who did not have children yet reported feeling some anxiety about their future ability to balance their careers with raising children. Female students also reported that they did not believe their male peers had spent much time thinking about having children and that, when they did, it was not with as much depth. Female students responded to the subject of balancing work and family in one of three ways:

(1) *No Children = No Conflict Model* – This group of students stated that they did not want to have children [(N = 7) of all females and (N = 5) among cis-females]. Four of the seven students in this group cited conflict with career as the primary reason they did not plan to have children in their future. They felt that the demands of the workplace and lack of structural supports in place for working families, combined with lack of males interested in sharing housework and childcare, would make it impossible for them to have children without giving up on their careers. One student cited her experience as the eldest child of a single mother helping to raise her younger siblings as the reason she did not want children of her own. Finally, two trans-women stated that they definitely did not want children, one of them citing sterilization due to hormone-therapy as a factor, combined with her lack of desire for a monogamous relationship.

(2) *Male Breadwinner/Female “Choice” Model* – Among female students who do want children, these students stated that they wanted to have careers but could also imagine being stay-at-home mothers (N = 9). They were unable to imagine finding husbands who would be willing to take on primary parenting responsibilities, citing society’s gender bias toward stay-at-home-fathers. Only

one student planned to “opt out” of the labor force in order to have children, while the remainder expressed fears of not being able to re-enter the labor force due to stigmatization associated with motherhood and losing their competitive edge.

(3) *Dual-Earner-Dual-Carer Model* – Of those who want children, the majority of female students (N = 30) expressed a desire to share parenting and financial responsibilities with their future partners, but anticipate this being “unrealistic” and felt the burden of making a choice would be disproportionately on them. They cited a variety of obstacles standing in the way of their gender-egalitarian goals: (i) lack of structural supports from a public policy standpoint, (ii) gender bias from employers, (iii) family-of-origin/religious/cultural pressures, (iv) society’s gender bias that stigmatizes fathers who want to be more involved, especially stay-at-home-fathers, (v) their male peers’ seeming lack of interest in joining the movement toward gender-parity in parenting, and (vi) their own internalized gender scripts linking parenthood to womanhood.

The following excerpts reflect each of the three views expressed by female students in relation to their anticipated work-family model.

Model 1 (No Children = No Conflict)

This passage reflects the sentiments held by females in category 1, who expressed fears that children would derail their career plans due to society’s gender roles. These women expressed a lack of trust in public policy to support working mothers combined with a lack of trust in men to share parenting duties equally.

EM: What is your major?

Alison: Social Work, with a minor in Social Justice. So, I want to be an international social worker, but not – I feel sometimes like social work will get too boring for me and I want to be organizing. I want to be out there like Social Justice rallies and stuff, so definitely something with kids like adolescents, teach – because I feel like it's easier to build strong people than fix broken older people ... so working with kids. I don't want children either. I don't want to get married. I got to want maybe a partner. I might be polyamorous. I don't know. I want somebody, but I don't want legal binding. I don't know kids because that's like a whole new life ... I want to travel a lot, too. And it's hard, it's going to be hard if, you know, a kid – if you have a kid because, that kid, they depend on you. You're its mother. Like that's the one person that is always seems to be there for you no matter what and I don't want to be that.

EM: Do you see a conflict between your career goals and the possibility of becoming a parent?

Alison: Hell, yeah.

Model 2 (Male Breadwinner/Female “Choice”)

The following excerpt reflects the sentiments expressed by women in category 2, who want careers, and potentially some time at home with young children, but fear not being able to re-enter the labor force if they elect to stay-at-home parenthood for even a short period. This group of women did not believe their male counterparts would be willing to take on primary parenting duties and felt that society put the burden on them as women to make a choice between career and motherhood.

Alexi: I actually talk about this a lot, and my mom was just here and I ask her a lot. It was kind of the theme of the weekend because I do definitely want children, and growing up with my mother being there gave me a really strong conviction. It is so important for a parent to be there, even more than just being there for a child-- to be experiencing life with the child until the child goes to school. So for me that's really at odds. I want to have a long interesting career that may not be conducive to that idealistic conception of family. My concentration within political science is international relations. So ideally I'll be travelling and those kinds of things ...so I haven't really worked it all out.

EM: So at this point, as a freshman in college, you're already anticipating there being a conflict between your career and family?

Alexi: Oh yeah, absolutely.

EM: And what kinds of conflicts would you expect would come up?

Alexi: I mean, just taking so much time off. I would feel the need to take a lot of time off. I think it's really important that you experience life with your kid for a while. My mom is a prime example. It was really hard for her to jump back into the workforce. We moved to Grand Junction Colorado, which made sense then. But if she was going to be working in marketing then it made no sense at all. You lose your context... it's just really hard to jump back into a career. I think I would find it really unsatisfying to work so hard towards a career and not really experience it, you know?

EM: And do you think that this is an issue for male students? Is it an issue for fathers?

Alexi: Not nearly so much. No, I don't think that they think about it.

EM: Is it something that you hear other female students talk about? In the women's leadership program, your classes, or your friendship networks?

Alexi: Yeah...I think a bit. I do hear people talking about it. For some reason, I know that I want kids, and I babysit a four year old all the time. So every time I get back from babysitting her I'm like "I want children right now, she's just so adorable!". I think that a lot of people in college are not in touch with those desires but they will have them later. So they're just like "if it happens it happens." It's just part of my daily life because I babysit this girl a lot.

While only one student in category 2 stated that she was already planning to exit her career to be a stay-at-home mother, her reasoning reflects structural factors that impact all women who enter male-dominated professions. This student planned to go into finance, as her older brother had

already done, and was well-aware that this career choice is notoriously incompatible with involved-parenthood, as reflected in this passage:

Stacey: I should clarify what I mean by not being a feminist first. I don't think I'm a feminist in the way that ... I'm more realistic about my expectations. I expect to be treated fairly equal but at the same time I know there are certain things about my aspirations and the way society works.

I never consider myself a feminist because I don't demand certain things. It's not that I think a feminist is someone militant about what they want. For example, if I'm going to go into grad school, I'm going to go into a certain field that requires I go to grad school early and then my career starts and in financing you just don't have time to have a family at the same time.

Grad school doesn't make sense. Part of being a girl does factor into whether or not I want to go to business school. In that sense I know I'm setting feminism back years by saying, "Because I'm a girl I'm not going to go to grad school because I want to have a family." But at the same time, it's more realistic because it's less, "I want this, I want this." At the same time, when somebody says something like, "It's because it's a girls sport," I get mad. I know, "Yeah, I'll never hit as fast as other servers on the guys team," but I'm okay with that. It's a strange line but I know I would never say I'm necessarily a feminist.

We see here that Stacey is responding both to society's entrenched gender inequalities (i.e. mothers, not fathers, leave their professions to stay home with children) as well as the stigmatization of the term feminist. She distances herself from feminism, while stating that she still expects to be treated equally and gets angry when people make trivializing comments about women's sports.

Model 3 (Dual-Earner-Dual-Carer)

Finally, this passage reflects the sentiments expressed by women in category 3, who want both careers and children. They emphasized the need for adequate maternity leave and reliable childcare. Some women in this group expressed a distrust of daycare centers. Nearly all the women in this group believed parental leave in the U.S. is not nearly enough with regard to the amount of time made available to new parents.

EM: Do you imagine having a family with children in your future? If so, how do you see balancing that with your career? Would you like to be able to do both? Or would you like to do one or the other?

Aliyah: Me personally, I would like to do both. I couldn't see myself staying at home especially after my children went to school. I would probably be bored. I wouldn't want to send my child to daycare at five months because that's too young, but probably like a year or so like you know, just so you [the child] can kind of verbalize if something is

wrong. You know, I worry about stuff like that. So, I guess like a year at home, you know, I feel like every mother should have that.

Finally, this last passage reflects the sentiments expressed by women in category 3, who emphasized the need for fathers to be involved in raising children as well as the need for gender equality in the workplace.

EM: Ideally, if you were to have the family structure that you would want to have, what would be your partner's role in raising the children?

Karen: I think my partner would be very involved in raising our children because we made them together. If his work was less busy then maybe he would be home more and he would cook for the kids or something. But I would try to make it home for dinner too and do those kind of things. But if he took them on a playdates instead of me, I'm okay with that too. I don't really believe in gender roles in the family. I just feel like everybody should play their part and if that means that you have to do a more traditional or in society's eyes a more traditional "mom duty" where you take them on playdates and you drop them off at soccer and maybe drop them off at school ... I think it's harder for women to be very successful because even successful women who don't have families, they're just seen as cut-throat bitches. They're never respected completely. For some reason their success is always aligned with being a bitch or an asshole or some kind of controlling person. There has to be something wrong with her. But I hope that I can find a balance between being a boss and a wife and a lawyer and all those good things. It could be a problem but I refuse to let it be one.

Discussion

We see from these results that there are a few similarities and a number of differences in how male and female students imagine their future families and career prospects. In total, 5 family models were described: (1) Male Breadwinner Model, (2) Economic Model of Breadwinner, (3) Male Breadwinner/Female "Choice" Model, (4) Dual-Earner-Dual-Carer Model, and (5) No Children = No Conflict Model. Two of the models were described by both male and female students, two of the models were described only by male students, and one of the models was described only by female students.

Similarities by Gender

The two desired family models that were described by students of both genders were the "Male Breadwinner/Female 'Choice' Model" (where males were only 6% more likely to embrace

this model) and the “Dual-Earner-Dual-Carer Model” (where females were 48% more likely to desire this model).

Differences by Gender

One difference I found is that while 21% of the males in this sample embraced a “Male Breadwinner Model,” stating a preference for their future wives to stay home with children, none of the women in my sample shared a desire for this family model. None of the women I interviewed expressed a desire for a partner who expected her to stay home with children. The only female student who stated that she was likely to “opt out” of the labor force cited workplace reasons (i.e. she believed her career choice of finance would be incompatible with raising children), not gender ideology reasons for her anticipated family model. I did not meet any college women who fantasized about being taken care of financially by a future husband.

Another difference I found is that some men (21%) framed their preference for parental care (over daycare or other forms of childcare) within the context of an “Economic Model of Breadwinner.” These men stated that one of the parents should stay home to raise children, and that it should be whichever parent makes less money. In contrast, none of the women held strong views that linked primary parenthood with a larger paycheck. Only one female student cited economic factors as a potential link to stay-at-home parenthood, but she also stated that she felt her current partner would not be willing to stay home because it would be emasculating, and that she would like to remain in the workforce. It is important to note here that both male and female students in my research were aware of a gender gap in pay. With this awareness, men stating they would be willing to stay home with children if their future wives made more money are being somewhat disingenuous. They are making this statement with the knowledge that women on average earn less than men. In this light, they are partially embracing a male breadwinner model

(by emphasizing the importance of a stay-at-home-parent), and rationalizing it in advance by citing economic reasons as the lead factor in arriving at this family model.

A third difference I found was that while students of both genders (29% of males and 23% of females) described a “Male Breadwinner/Female ‘Choice’ Model,” the men described the choice (to remain employed or stay home with children) as “her” choice, without referencing either (i) their own role in relation to the “second shift” or (ii) society’s constraints on “her” choice. In contrast, women framed this “choice” as a problem that fell on their shoulders because of their gender and society’s constraints.

A fourth difference I found was that some women (9%) embraced a “No Children = No Conflict Model,” citing children as an obstacle to their career goals. None of the men in my sample stated a belief that having children would conflict with their career. Most of the men (82%; N = 14) stated that they did want children, while only two males were unsure, and one male stated he did not want biological children for ecological reasons.

A final key difference I found was that while female students were far more likely (by 48%) to embrace an egalitarian “Dual-Earner-Dual-Carer Model,” they were also very skeptical that this option would in fact be available to them for a variety of reasons. In contrast, the males who embraced this model stated simply that they wanted to share economic and parenting duties with their future wives, and did not elaborate on potential obstacles to this being a possibility for them.

Input from Transgender Women

Among my sample of 916 students surveyed, three identified as transgender. Of these, two, Jessica and Karly, participated in interviews. Both are transgender women who identify as feminists. Each stated that they felt the feminist movement and the transgender rights movement

overlapped, citing workplace discrimination, street harassment, and rape as issues that affect both women and non-binary people. Both also felt that within the feminist movement, transgender issues were marginalized. As Karly, a sophomore at Whitney put it:

Unless one of the speakers having the conversation is trans, I feel like it's always going to exclude them. So they [transgender issues] kind of get tacked onto things. I don't want to say everyone is like that, but I just feel like trans is given as an afterthought.

With regard to the topic of gender and work, these transwomen shared the concerns of their cis-female peers relative to wage equality, glass ceilings, and sexual harassment in the workplace. On the subject of marriage and children, their aspirations diverged from the aspirations expressed by the majority of cis-females in this study. While 39 out of 44 cis-females expressed a desire for children, neither Karly nor Jessica saw children in their future. In contrast to the four cis-women who cited fear of career penalties as their reason for not wanting children, the two transwomen in this study offered different reasons for their plans to remain child-free. Jessica stated that her hormone therapy would make her unable to have biological children and that at the present time she felt no impulse to be around children. Karly stated simply that she had no desire for children. Additionally, all of the cis-women in this sample, including one lesbian and three bisexual women expressed a desire to get married at some point. Karly also expressed a desire to get married, while Jessica stated that she did not want to get married because she did not believe in monogamous relationships.

Elite vs. State Comparison

Table 8. State vs. Elite: Preferred Family Model Among Female Students (N = 46)

N = 18 (Female students at State Schools)	N = 28 (Female students at Elite Schools)
No Kids = 22% of State (4/18)	No Kids = 11% of Elite (3/28)
Choice = 11% of State (2/18)	Choice = 25% of Elite (7/28)
Dual-Earner = 67% of State (12/18)	Dual-Earner = 64% of Elite (18/28)

While the female students in my sample represented a wide range of career ambitions, some coming from financially privileged backgrounds and others from middle-and-working-class households, I did not find any significant differences in their likeliness to express gender-egalitarian goals with regard to career and family. For instance, 64% of female students at the elite schools and 67% of female students at the state schools in my sample shared a strong preference for the dual-earner-dual-carer family model, as shown in Table 8. For those who stated that they either did not plan to have children or could imagine themselves taking time off from careers when they become mothers, this was their fallback position. They also held gender-egalitarian views and felt that society *should* support a dual-earner-dual-carer model, but expressed skepticism that this model would be available to them. Faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles (e.g. dearth of family-friendly employers or public policy), 33% of women at state schools and 36% of women at elite schools felt pressed to give up either motherhood or career ambition. One difference I found in this sample is that female students at the state schools were slightly more likely (by 11%) to employ the strategy of “opting out” of having children in order to focus on their careers, while the female students at the elite schools were slightly more inclined (by 14%) to consider “opting out” of the workforce for a period of time in order to have children (see Table 8). Given that students at elite institutions are more likely to have access to both more cultural and financial capital than their state school peers, and that they imagine themselves partnering with spouses who have significant financial security, it is not surprising that they imagine they will have access to the financial resources to make it possible for them to become stay-at-home-parents for a period of time. In contrast, female students at state schools were more likely to embrace a model of “self-reliance” (see Gerson, 2010) as a fallback strategy if unable to achieve their ideal career-family model. The common thread that weaves all these women together is that at every school I

visited (N =4), female students were experiencing societal pressures to “have it all.” In response, about 2/3 of them planned to get it by employing a gender-egalitarian approach to career and parenting, while about 1/3 felt it was not possible given society’s constraints.

The Choice Gap

In *Opting Out*, Pamela Stone (2007) dedicates a chapter to the “choice gap,” in which she debunks the myth that women are fully free to make choices about career and motherhood in a society that shapes their decisions by heavily gendered biases and constraints.

These educated, high-achieving women face a double bind, which is created by the pressure to be both the ideal mother (based on an intensive mothering model) and the ideal worker (based on the norms of their professions). The result of this double bind is that their choices or options are indeed much more limited than they appear at first or than the women themselves appreciate. In its most fundamental manifestation, the choice gap is the difference between the decisions or “choices” women could have made about their careers in the absence of caregiving, especially mothering, responsibilities, and the decisions they actually make to accommodate these responsibilities in light of the realities of their professions and those of their husbands. ... The choice gap makes individual preferences fairly transparent and explicit, and in so doing reveals the invisible hand of the kinds of things Olivia railed against – culture, jobs, society – the kinds of things sociologists call “structure.” (Stone: 112)

Just as economists have noted a gender gap in pay, I share Stone’s view that there is a gender gap in “choice” when it comes to making decisions about career, marriage, and children. What I found in my research is that this “choice gap” begins even before women take that first job within their chosen career path. The “choice gap” already exists among college students as they plan for their future careers and future families. As the title of this chapter reflects, the conflict between work and family is not gender-neutral. On the contrary, the conflict is disproportionately experienced by women. Hence, I label this concept the “feminization of the work-family conflict,” with a nod to the concept of the “feminization of poverty,”⁹ a term used to shine light on how poverty around the globe disproportionately affects women. Just as women are disproportionately represented

⁹ A term coined by Diane Pearce (1978) in “The feminization of poverty: Women, work and welfare.” *Urban and Social Change Review*, 11, 28-36.

among those living in poverty, women are also disproportionately impacted by a structure that lacks adequate parental leave, affordable high-quality daycare centers, family-friendly work options (e.g. part-time positions, job-sharing programs, flexible hours), as well as hiring and promotion practices that stigmatize commitment to parenting. Women are impacted more than men because they are more likely to take on the role of the primary parent. As such, women are more likely to take on the role of stay-at-home parent (in 2012 women represented 84% of stay-at-home parents, down from 90% in 1980)¹⁰ in a family model that calls for one breadwinner and one caretaker. Women are also more likely to take on more of the “second shift” in a family model that calls for two breadwinners. In addition, women who remain in the workforce after having children risk not getting promoted and/or not getting interesting projects and opportunities due to “mommy tracking” (Stone, 2007). As some of the students I interviewed pointed out, gender bias in the workplace influences some employers to hire male candidates over female candidates for fear that women will quit (or be less productive workers) when they have children.

Current FMLA policy in the U.S. allows for only 12 weeks unpaid leave after the arrival of a child within the first year. There are two resources that are sorely lacking in the current FMLA policy: one is money and the other is time. Without paid leave, mothers (especially those from low-income households) experience financial burden in addition to all the other stressors that come with a new baby. Without adequate time off (other countries give between 14 weeks (Germany, fully paid) and 65 weeks (Sweden, 80% pay for first 52 weeks)),¹¹ mothers are forced to make a choice between returning to work before they are likely ready and quitting their jobs in order to stay home with a new baby. For women of modest income, there is no choice. They must return

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, “Growing Number of Dads Home with the Kids,” June 5, 2014 (Livingston, Parker & Patten)

¹¹ Gornick and Meyers (2003): 124-125

to work. For women with access to other financial resources (e.g. a spouse's earnings), inadequate family leave positions them to make a false choice between being a "good mother" and maintaining a career. This is the double bind of which Stone speaks. It puts women in a lose/lose scenario: If she goes back to work, she is not a "good mother." If she leaves her job (due to inadequate maternity leave) to stay home with her baby longer than twelve weeks, she risks losing the career that she has invested in since college. Other consequences of inadequate maternity leave for mothers who must return to work too soon include: (i) disruption of mother-child bonding during the critical period after giving birth or adopting a child, (ii) interruption of breast-feeding for mother and baby (pediatricians recommend that it is healthiest for babies to be breastfed for the first 12 months of life), and (iii) mother not being ready physically, mentally, and/or emotionally to return to work resulting in both decreased productivity at work and poor health outcomes for the mother (and potentially her child). In addition, the issue of childcare presents its own set of problems. Childcare is expensive unless one has a family member who is retired and willing to take care of her child full-time for free. Daycare centers are costly, and nannies are usually even more expensive. There is a great deal of inconsistency in the quality of daycare centers across the U.S. Even if one finds a high-quality daycare center that fits the household budget, the reality is that children who attend daycare get sick frequently (about 1-2 times per month in the first year), and mothers are usually the default parent to stay home with a sick child.

While it is true that men who want to be more involved fathers are also disadvantaged by the current state of the workplace, it is women who most often feel forced to make career sacrifices on behalf of their families. What I knew going into this research is that mothers shoulder the burden of the "second shift"¹² to a greater extent than fathers (Hochschild, 1989; Stone, 2007;

¹² A term coined by Arlie Hochschild in *The Second Shift* (1989).

Milkie, Raley, and Bianchi, 2009). What I learned from my research is that women shoulder the burden of thinking, planning, and worrying about having children long before they actually have children.¹³ Most of the college students I interviewed held egalitarian gender ideologies¹⁴ in an abstract sense. Yet, when it comes to the issue of work/family harmony, they are still constrained in their thinking by a traditional family model that links masculinity with professional success and femininity with raising children, as depicted in this excerpt from an interview with Blithe, a senior at Whitney:

EM: What would you say for your generation are the most pressing issues that you think the feminist movement has not yet accomplished, that you would like to see accomplished in your lifetime?

Blithe: I think that the most pressing issue is changing the culture and giving women more opportunities to do exactly what they want to do. If they want to work, then that's great. I think that that requires having paid leave, for one, and at least 12 weeks. And I think it also requires reducing the stigma of males staying home more if they decided to, because I think a lot of males would not want to do that just because they would be considered ... it would be emasculating, I guess. And I think those are the two large things that need to be redone because there are -- I mean, there are a lot of women achievers, there's more women attending college now than males. I think the largest part of having more women actually be in leadership roles has to do with changing the life at home and having a culture that really respects men staying at home, men doing some of the housework, et cetera.

EM: You mentioned that you have a boyfriend right now. Have you had these kinds of conversations with him about gender roles?

Blithe: A little bit, yeah.

EM: What would you say his views are?

Blithe: His view is that it's all pretty much equal. It was really funny, because we were talking about kids, and the roles of the wife or the husband and he was saying, "Well, it would be so fun to be a stay-at-home-dad, you just like watch TV or do fun activities." But I don't know if he would ever actually do that, even though he says it would be fun. I think a lot of it is due to his ... he really values a parent at home, because he grew up with that. And so I think for him it is like probably the woman will stay at home. And it's really whoever makes more money will probably be the one that's working and whoever makes less money is the one at home.

EM: What would be your ideal balance in your future of having a career, having a family, who stays home, who's in the workforce, who spends time with the kids?

Blithe: I've been thinking about that a lot actually and I feel like I won't completely know until I'm actually at that point and have a kid because I feel like I will want to spend more time with that child and care for that child and everything. And I do think it's important to have someone there, at least in the early years with the child because that is such a large factor of how that child develops. And so ... but at the same time, I do want to work.

¹³ Sheryl Sandberg discusses this topic in her book *Lean In* (2013).

¹⁴ This is consistent with Kathleen Gerson's findings in *The Unfinished Revolution: How a New Generation is Reshaping Family, Work, and Gender in America* (2010).

As Blithe's reflections highlight, we are still in a period of what Hochschild (1989) called a "stalled revolution" and which, more recently, Gerson (2010) called an "unfinished revolution," both referencing the unfinished business of the Women's Liberation Movement. I argue that the lasting impact of the "separate spheres" work/family model in the U.S., which both my informants and researchers commonly refer to as "traditional" is evidence that our society is still operating under the influence of hegemonic masculinity. In line with a Gramscian theory of hegemony, the cultural dynamics in U.S. society are such that "men" as a social group still claim and have been able to sustain a dominant position over "women" as a group (Gramsci, 1971). In the transition from a "traditional" family model to a "dual-earner-dual-carer" family model,¹⁵ what we are seeing is an ongoing tension between these two competing narratives. While the "traditional" narrative symbolizes a relatively brief moment in our nation's past, the "dual-earner-dual-carer" narrative symbolizes the hope of a gender-egalitarian future, one that is already being realized (or more realized) in other countries. In their book, *Families That Work* (2003), Gornick and Meyers found that for mothers in the U.S. the "preschooler effect" (i.e. the percentage difference in the probability of being employed associated with having a youngest child aged three to five, relative to parents of the same sex in the same country whose youngest child is aged thirteen to seventeen) is larger than in seven of their ten comparison countries, including all of the Nordic countries as well as France, Belgium, and Canada (Gornick and Meyers, 2003: 64). As already noted, the traditional model that peaked in the 1950s (59.4%) no longer represents the majority of American households, with 87% *not* fitting a traditional model by 2006. Despite the fact that the traditional family model of male breadwinner/female homemaker no longer reflects the reality for most

¹⁵ See Gornick and Meyers (2003).

American families, it nevertheless remains a powerful fantasy in our culture, reflected in media images depicting women as mothers and men as workers (see Kuperberg and Stone, 2008). Cultural scripts and media images promoting the idea that fathers should bear primary financial responsibility for their families and mothers should assume primary parenting responsibilities help explain why today's college students are still constrained in their thinking on the subject of work/family balance.

Effortless Perfectionism

Tellingly, female students¹⁶ tended to internalize their anticipated career/family conflict as a problem they would need to solve primarily on their own. They did not express optimism that either the federal government, their local communities, or their employers would provide much (if any) support for working families in time for their generation to reap the benefits. They also did not believe that their future partners¹⁷ would be willing or able to perform the duties of primary caregiver to their children. This was especially the case for female students at the elite schools in my sample, many of whom cited “effortless perfectionism” as a cultural norm in the highly competitive environments at their schools. Students explained that they felt pressure to be perfect at everything, while at the same time a pressure to present themselves in a way that did not draw attention to the hard work required to achieve the desired results. In Erving Goffman's terms, they felt intense pressure to present their “frontstage” selves at all times, never letting anyone see what happens “backstage.” The students I spoke with reported that males were also subject to pressure to perform academically, but as female students they experienced additional pressures which they

¹⁶ Heterosexual and bisexual cis-gendered.

¹⁷ 87% of female students in my sample identified as heterosexual. Of those who identified as bisexual (7%), all thought it was more “realistic” that they would partner with a male. Two transwomen identified as pansexual (4%), and they both stated that they did not want children in their future. Only one student identified as lesbian (2%), and she had not given much thought yet to the idea of having children.

believed their male counterparts did not. These additional pressures included a sense that they had to work harder than male students to be heard and taken seriously in an academic sense as well as pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty ideals. As I listened to students talk about the concept of “effortless perfectionism” and the unique pressures they felt as females in these highly competitive environments, I was reminded of the myth of the “supermom” that Arlie Hochschild described in her groundbreaking book, *The Second Shift* (1989). Hochschild described the “supermom” as “the woman with the flying hair” depicted in media images of working mothers. Her hair is perfect. Her makeup is perfect. Her work clothes are impeccably tailored and clean. She carries a briefcase in one hand and a baby in the other. She does it all.

There is no trace of stress, no suggestion that the mother needs help from others. She isn’t harassed. She’s busy, and it’s glamorous to be busy. Indeed, the image of the on-the-go working mother is very like the glamorous image of the busy top executive. The scarcity of the working mother’s time seems like the scarcity of the top executive’s time. Yet their situations are totally different. The busy top executive is in a hurry at work because his (or her) time is worth so much. He is in a hurry at home because he works long hours at the office. In contrast, the working mother is in a hurry because her time at work is worth so little, and because she has no help at home. The imagistic analogy between the busy working mother and the busy top executive obscures the wage gap between them at work, and their different amounts of backstage support at home (Hochschild: 23).

Similarly, the archetype of the “perfect” female student looks something like this: Her hair and skin are perfect. Her makeup is perfect. Her clothes are expensive and on trend with the latest fashions. She gets straight A’s. She’s a varsity athlete with the willowy figure of a ballet dancer. She writes for the student newspaper, volunteers at a local soup kitchen, and spends her summers interning for think tanks in Washington, D.C. In essence, “effortless perfectionism” is the college version of the “supermom” and its function is to groom high-achieving young women for their future roles as “supermoms” by normalizing individualism, perfectionism, and working to the point of exhaustion.

The other function that both myths perform is masking gender inequality. The “supermom” does not require adequate maternity leave from her government, equal partnership

from her spouse, or part-time work opportunities (that don't result in career suicide) from her employer. She does it all by herself. She is the ideal worker *and* the perfect mother. She somehow manages to be in two places at the same time. That's one of her superpowers. She never misses an important business meeting and she never misses her daughter's soccer game. Likewise, the "perfect" female student does not complain about males dominating classroom discussions, or the stands being empty at her sporting events, or the dearth of female students in leadership positions at her school. She doesn't complain about a guy she doesn't know grabbing her breast as she passes through a crowd at a party. She doesn't complain about being sexually harassed on campus. She doesn't mind sexist jokes. She's above all that. She doesn't need feminism because feminism is over, and that's proven by the fact that she is already at this elite university. What more could she want?

Just as the myth of the "supermom" serves to mask the gendered tensions between the workplace and the domestic sphere, I believe that the myth of "effortless perfectionism" serves to mask gender inequality at elite institutions. Speaking up about injustice for any student at any college takes courage and involves some amount of risk. Female students at elite schools bear the additional pressure of knowing how privileged they are to be there. In some ways, they have more at stake than their counterparts at non-elite institutions. In an era where the very word "feminist" carries a stigma, speaking openly about issues of gender inequality involves risking stigmatization for the speaker. This is especially the case at elite schools, where honoring one's institution (and defending its reputation) is much more a part of the school culture. From the classroom to heteronormative body practices (e.g. disordered eating, obsessive exercising, compulsory makeup application), "effortless perfectionism" serves to keep female students on a hamster wheel of working *extra* hard at x,y,z while also working hard at cultivating an image that they're not

working *too* hard. Thus, the myths of “supermom” and “effortless perfectionism” both serve to mask gender inequality and operate within the context of hegemonic masculinity in our culture.

Indeed, female college students have already internalized both the ideal worker model and the ideal mother model. As Sharon Hays argued in *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (1996), the modern standards of mothering, which she labels “intensive mothering,” stand in direct conflict with the impersonal and competitive nature of the modern workplace. I believe that the model of “intensive mothering” in our culture today inhibits women from achieving full equality in the workplace in the same way that the postwar culture of the “feminine mystique” inhibited women from achieving professional goals in the last century. The “intensive mothering” model that Hays described in 1996 reappeared in her 2003 book, *Flat Broke With Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform*, in which she found that women of working-class and middle-class backgrounds were equally likely to have internalized the “intensive-mothering” philosophy. Annette Lareau’s research confirms these findings, as discussed in her book, *Unequal Childhoods* (2003). Lareau found that middle-and-upper-class parents embraced a parenting model she calls “concerted cultivation,” in line with what Hays calls “intensive mothering.”¹⁸ And as Hochschild (1989) found, men’s participation in the domestic sphere has lagged behind women’s increased participation in the paid labor force. Hochschild found that 80% of men (in a sample of heterosexual couples where both spouses were employed full-time) did not share housework and childcare equally, amounting to a “leisure gap” between women and men at home that parallels the wage gap in the workplace.¹⁹ Her research found that women performed an additional 15 hours per week of domestic labor, totaling an extra month per year of 24-hour days more than their

¹⁸ One notable difference in their findings is that Hays found no difference in parenting philosophies based on socioeconomic status, while Lareau found that working-class and poor parents were more likely to embrace a model of “Natural Growth.”

¹⁹ Hochschild found that 20% of men shared domestic work equally, 70% did more than 1/3 but less than 1/2, and 10% did less than 1/3.

husbands. Since then, a study of 2000-2003 data found that the leisure gap had narrowed from an extra four weeks to an extra two weeks (Milkie et al., 2009). Given that the social norms around parenting have intensified (Hays, 1996; Lareau, 2003; Douglas and Michaels, 2006) and remain gendered; that women still perform more domestic labor than their male partners (Bianchi, 2000; Stone, 2007; Milkie et al., 2009); and that education is the main factor in predicting women's employment²⁰ (England, 2004; Boushey, 2005; Goldin, 2006; Kuperberg and Stone, 2008), it is no wonder that female college students experience so much anxiety about their future ability to achieve career/family harmony.

²⁰ In "Women's Employment Among Blacks, Whites, and Three Groups of Latinas: Do More Privileged Women Have Higher Employment?" Paula England found that education was the main factor in predicting women's employment by 2001, with high school graduates having 9 weeks more employment, college graduates having 13 weeks more employment, and women with advanced degrees having 17 weeks more employment annually compared with high school dropouts.

Chapter Two: “Female Athletes as Pinups and Fashionistas: Gender Inequality in Collegiate and Professional Sports”

In this chapter, I provide an overview of my interview findings on the subject of gender and sport, in which a number of gendered themes emerged. I apply Weber’s concept of “ideal types” to analyze how female athletes are portrayed as either sex objects (“Bunnies”) or fashion models (“Barbies”), both types serving the dual function of trivializing women’s sports, while alienating women from their own bodies in the context of consumerism. I demonstrate how college students, especially athletes, internalize cultural messages about achieving the “right kind of body” and how ideal body types are gendered within a context of dichotomous categories (Epstein, 1988). I also employ Judith Butler’s concept of “performing gender” and Bourdieu’s concept of “cultural capital” to explain female athletes’ participation in practices that simultaneously promote and exploit them. The first section discusses the findings among college students in this study, while the second section situates these findings in the broader context of sport culture and consumerist culture in U.S. society at large.

Findings

I. Male Students

Another key theme that emerged from my interviews with students was the subject of gender and sports. Ten out of the seventeen male students I interviewed talked about sports as an area where gender roles present questions and challenges for their generation. On the whole, male students experienced sports as an arena where they felt pressure to perform masculinity in a hypermasculine sense. They described experiences of being told not to be “weak,” to “get tough,” and not to be a “girl,” a “pussy,” or a “bitch.” In this context, “being a girl” (and the derogatory labels attached to the female sex) meant being incompetent at sport physically and also lacking in

mental toughness. For the male students, gender was invoked as a mechanism not only to inspire athletic performance on the field (i.e. run fast, play aggressively, win) but also as a policing method to ensure gender role conformity (i.e. “be a man”) off the field. My informants reported that as young children they played in mixed gender groups for sports like soccer and baseball, but by the time they reached middle school, they were funneled into single-sex teams. Once segregated, the boys learned that “playing like a girl” was an insult, and in both subtle and not-subtle ways they were trained to guard sport as an arena of superiority over females. In line with this standard of upholding their masculinity through sport, three themes emerged from the experiences that male students reported: (1) Men often poke fun at women’s teams and put female athletes down by touting superior physical strength over women; (2) Men fear losing to a woman in sport because it threatens their sense of masculinity; (3) Men fear hurting a woman in sport and therefore don’t play as aggressively against a female competitor as they would a male competitor.

Theme 1 – Men Claim Superior Strength/Poke Fun at Women’s Sports

Of the ten men who cited sports as an area of gender conflict, five talked about the tendency of male athletes to tout their physical advantage over women as a means to justify gender inequality in some fashion. Michael, a sophomore at Acorn who describes his ethnic background as “a mixture of white stuff,” self-identifies as an athlete, a fraternity member, and a computer whiz. He has swum competitively since the age of six and was captain of his high school’s varsity swim team. He now swims with the men’s club team, as his state college does not have funding for a men’s varsity team. In this excerpt, Michael calls attention to men’s inherent physical advantage over women as a possible rationale for the general public’s lack of interest in women’s professional sports:

I think the reason why football and basketball get a lot of attention, and I don't mean just to say those two specifically, but I think it's really a money issue. For example, swimming, you don't exactly wear a whole lot, so there's not a whole thing that you can sponsor. So there's really not a whole lot of people pushing for you to be televised or anything like that because it's hard for you to make money off of it. As far as women in sports, I don't really have an answer for you because if you look at women's basketball, it's obviously not nearly as popular. And truthfully I don't have an explanation for that. First, I don't really watch either of them. So maybe men, it's because men are inherently stronger or something, they can perform more flashy stuff. I don't know.

In the interview, Michael also noted that his sport does not get as much media attention as the “big four” (i.e. football, baseball, basketball, and ice hockey) and believes there is more opportunity for gender equality in swimming, in part because it is more individual than team sports and in part because swimming is less influenced by the business side of professional sports.

Joshua, a light-skinned black man, who says people often start speaking to him in Spanish because they assume he is Latino, is a political science major and a sprinter on the varsity track team at Acorn. He is also a peer educator for the university's program to end violence on campus and self-identifies as a feminist. Now a sophomore, he says he was introduced to the peer education program as a freshman by a senior who was captain of the men's track team at the time. He also described a personal history of exposure to domestic violence, as his father was physically and psychologically abusive toward his mother during his childhood. On the subject of gender and sport, he had this to say:

Athletes ... they're stronger, they're fit, they're agile, they're fast, things like that. So they already feel as though they are a step above the average. And you see that, you often see that in the community. And I don't see myself that way. I'm a student here just like everybody else. Yes, you go and you focus on your engineering and I go and I focus on the track. But at the end of the day we both wear [school] colors. But athletes, a lot of the time, of course I can't speak for everybody, but sometimes they feel they are entitled to something more. And so that's why they feel as though, let's say, there's an athlete in a relationship and his or her partner is not an athlete. They may feel as though they are entitled to control the relationship more which isn't true because we know a relationship is between two people and so there should be a balance. But they are trained to focus, they are trained to be the best. When I step on the line, when I get into my race, I have to be in control of everything. I need to be the best on the track. I can't let anyone push me down. If an athlete can't leave that on the track and it comes into their personal lives, that's where we see issues. It's generally understood by everyone, by men and women equally, that men are faster than women. But all the rape culture that comes with my sport ... you see when the men are separated from the women. For example, my team does not travel with the women and so you see the expressions and some of the things that men say, that sort of drive this rape culture. You see that when the women are not around.

Although Joshua has not taken coursework in women's and gender studies, it is clear that his exposure to gender-egalitarian ideas and to feminist mentors and peers through his participation in the university's anti-violence program has impacted his way of thinking. Significantly, Joshua holds political career aspirations and, through his own life experience and college coursework, has a strong grasp of structural inequalities. Thus, his decision to align himself with feminism, as both a personal identity as well as a social movement, is informed by a combination of life experience, coursework, and exposure to feminist activism on campus.

Theme 2 – Men Fear Losing to Women: Threat to Masculinity

Four men talked about men's fear of losing to women in sports. In a joint interview with two young men (Evan (white) and Colin (South Asian)) who are active basketball players through informal networks, the following conversation ensued:

Evan: A couple of times at the [central campus] gym over here I've seen girls playing but that's very rarely, just a couple of times. So those courts, while they are for everyone, they're *always* taken up by the guys. And I feel like basketball is interesting because it's a sport that is seen as you know, "girls can play, guys can play, that's totally fine." But then you'll hear guys making fun of girls' basketball, like, "I had to watch my sister's game." And then making fun of the WNBA as opposed to the NBA.

EM: So you do think that men look down upon the WNBA?

Evan: Yeah.

Colin: Yup. It always bothers me. It's weird when—I've been put in situations where we're trying to have a pick-up game and there's a girl who wants to play and she might be *good*. People are hesitant to like pick on her because they just assume that there's going to be some weakness. That she's not going to be able to compete with your level. And it always, even if I'm on the losing end of it, it always just makes me happy when a girl just pulls out her best and pretty much puts every other guy to shame. And I'm like, "You didn't want to cover her?"

EM: So you don't mind a female opponent beating you?

Colin: Oh yeah. And as soon as that happens, you just get bombarded by excuses. "I wasn't covering her because she's a girl," or, "I wasn't trying to get too close."

Evan: Yeah, a lot of excuses.

Colin: Or, "I wasn't defending her well. That's why she hit all the shots." I'm like, "You can try defending her just as well as you want. She will still beat you."

EM: So do you see it as a threat to this idea of masculinity?

Colin: Uh huh.

Evan: Yeah, I would say so, a threat to masculinity, definitely.

In addition to illustrating men's fear of emasculation as a result of losing to a woman in sport, the observations shared by Evan and Colin reiterate the first theme, that men poke fun at women's sports and assume (until proven otherwise) that they are physically superior to female athletes. Indeed, these first two themes: men putting down women's sports and men's fear of losing to women in sports are both rooted in cultural constructions of "masculinity" that rely on homophobia and disassociation with all things "feminine," a subject which I discuss at length in Chapter 3, and to which I will return in the Discussion section of this chapter.

Theme 3 – Men Fear Hurting Women: Tradition of Chivalry

On the other side of the coin, our society teaches boys and men to be gentle with girls and women, to uphold a tradition of chivalry in which males are "gentlemen" and females are "ladies." "Ladies" are to be treated as tender objects. They are not equals, but rather delicate and mysterious beings. In addition to the stigma of being a "bra burner," another frequently cited objection to feminism that arose in my interviews with college students was the fear that feminism has (or could) destroy chivalry. As it relates to sports, three men spoke about how this tradition of chivalry problematizes gender equality in co-ed settings. The following excerpt from a focus group with these students from Acorn illustrates both themes two and three.

Brian: I'm on the club wrestling team because I want to give it a shot. I just started, so I'm pretty awful actually. In fact, I'm terrible. There's this one girl who comes pretty frequently. And she's good, man. She kicks my ass every time. And if I don't go balls out, I'm going to, like, count the lights. Because she's good, man! But when I go play soccer with a few girls, I'm not going to throw them to the ground to win a ball.

EM: But you would do that to a male opponent?

Brian: Oh yeah, definitely. All the time! And it's just, I don't know. I just do it. I feel bad. I'm not trying to hurt them but ...

EM: What do you think about the place that we are at in terms of gender dynamics for your generation?

Anthony: I mean it's so tough. It depends. It's like a case by case basis.

Brian: Yeah. It depends on the situation.

Anthony: It depends on the girl. Some girls are like, “Yeah, yeah! Come on, let's go! And then other girls are like, “Oh, you hit a girl. Why would you that?” And you're like, “Wait a minute. It's okay when it's like that. It's not okay here?” Or like the perfect example is on my high school wrestling team, you know, sometimes there would be girls who would wrestle. And if you lose to a girl it's, “Oh my God, you lost to a girl!”

Brian: Yeah. Exactly!

Anthony: But if you beat a girl it's, “Dude, why would you hurt a girl? Why would you beat her?” So you're like...

EM: Right. So either way it's not good.

Anthony: I got to do what I got to do.

Brian: Especially contact sports. It's different. But if I let my girlfriend win at mini-golf she blows a gasket!

Luke: Growing up, I have a younger sister, and I was always kind of told not to be rough with her and just like always go easy around her. And it's like, “Behave differently.” Like when me and my friends were hanging out, there's stuff that we knew we couldn't say around her. Or couldn't do ... that we would do if it was all guys.

The juxtaposition of themes Two and Three place men who are open to co-ed competition in a difficult position. Indeed, male athletes in the post-Title IX era find themselves in a double bind:

(1) If they lose to a woman, they will likely be made fun of by other men, potentially disrupting their sense of masculinity, and (2) If they compete at the same level of intensity against a female opponent as they would against a male opponent, they risk being chastised for being “too aggressive.” Thus, their sportsmanship is called into question on grounds of chivalry, nearly as much as on grounds of hypermasculinity.

II. Female Students

Twenty-nine of the forty-six female students I interviewed also cited sports as an area where gender inequality persists in the twenty-first century. Female students were well aware that the role of “athlete” was based on a male model that relegated them to second-class citizenship. They were also aware that their male peers were both afraid of losing to them and afraid of hurting them. Indeed, the women who cited sports as an arena of gender inequality gave examples that supported all three of the themes that came up in my interviews their male counterparts. Building on these, two additional themes emerged from my interviews with women: (4) In a Different

Straitjacket: The Double Bind of the Female Athlete and (5) Worth Their Salt: Female Athletes Must Prove Themselves.

Theme 1 – Men Claim Superior Strength/Poke Fun at Women’s Sports

The women I spoke with reiterated that men often made fun of women’s sports and touted their superior strength in an attempt to preserve their own sense of masculinity. Stacey, Gwen, and Cate, all student-athletes at Legacy, spoke to this theme and expressed their frustration:

Stacey: When somebody says something like, “It’s because it’s a girls sport,” I get mad. At the same time I know, “Yeah, I’ll never hit as fast as other servers on the guys team,” but I’m okay with that.

Gwen: I think we’re respected more than a lot of women’s sports would be because we were national champions last year, which is like a big accomplishment. And I think people take us seriously because of that. We have not lost the Ivy League title in 11 years. And that’s cool, but at the same time I think like things like lifting ... or I don’t know, conditioning.. like if you’re talking about the guy’s team, they’ll just.. they’ll just always put their lifting and conditioning regime above ours, like, “Oh, yes, that must be so hard when we do this,” like, “How much can you bench?”. And I remember my boyfriend was like, “Are you kidding me? I think I could bench over two times your weight!”

Cate: I think that it’s interesting here because I think that being a female athlete and friends with a lot of male athletes, there’s always kind of like.. like they respect female athletes but not as much as they might respect other male athletes. Because they... I don’t really blame anyone for this. I think it’s just kind of how things are, whether it’s society or what. But they ... you know, if we talk about fitness testing or something like that. If girls talk about that, the guys will just scoff at that and say, “Oh, like your fitness testing is really hard! [sarcasm] Oh, yeah? Well, this is what *we* do!” But at the same time I don’t think that it should translate, like we shouldn’t be able to squat 350 pounds like the football boys can. So just little things like that where we get a bit discredited.

As the experiences of these three athletes illustrate, their male counterparts frequently make distinctions between “women’s” sports and “men’s” sports, citing greater speed and/or strength attributed to men as a group. The implication here is that women’s sports are not “the real thing.” Female athletes reported that while they benefited from a certain amount of social status on campus as a result of their being athletes, they did not garner *as much* social status as the male athletes on campus, regardless of how successful their team was at winning titles.

Theme 2 – Men Fear Losing to Women: Threat to Masculinity

Stacey, an Asian-American sophomore majoring in international public affairs, is a top-ranked tennis player at Legacy. She spoke about her experience playing in mixed doubles and finding that some men felt threatened when she could beat them:

Stacey: The biggest difference was when we turned 15, 16. The guys thought they should start beating us hands down. This was at a tournament called Zonal. You have a team and you're assigned to play mixed doubles and it's by ranking. I was the one on team A so I was ranked number one in this section. I played mixed doubles with the number one of this section. We didn't go on for a while. I wanted to hit, I wanted to practice. I played baseline games against guys who were 4 or 5 on the team so they were ranked maybe 16 or something like that. Some of them, *very obviously*, made up an excuse to not hit. I would have never thought of that because I'm not somebody who ever thought of myself as being too good or something like that. But when the other guys started teasing them like, "Where are you actually going? Your match isn't for a few hours!" I noticed they didn't want to necessarily hit. One of them who is older and—I had a regular doubles partner and I played up. I was 14 playing this tournament and my doubles partner was 16. Her boyfriend was 16. This is her boyfriend who had always treated me like a little sister. We played a few baseline points, maybe three. He missed on one of the points. I missed a short ball that would have clearly been my point. And then I hit a winner. He chucked his racket, walked off the court.

EM: Do you think he would have done that to a male player?

Stacey: No, absolutely not.

As this story illustrates, we are at a moment of high gender tension in sports. As non-contact sports like tennis open doors for talented female athletes, male athletes may feel threatened by what they experience as shame in a setting where their masculinity is called into question when a female competitor is able to score against them or win outright. While gender norms have shifted in some ways since the second wave, it is clear sports is one domain where gender roles remain rigid. As a consequence, some of the female athletes I spoke with expressed a reluctance to win against their male counterparts, for fear of emasculating them. Stacey spoke of an ex-boyfriend who had asked her not to join an elite clinic because he feared losing to her. In the following excerpt she recalls a time when she lost to him on purpose.

Stacey: I tried to lose to him on purpose one time. A baseline game doesn't have—it's a bigger deal but without serves it doesn't have a formal feeling and guys don't have a huge advantage because girls' technique is stereotypically cleaner. We're not necessarily strong. I will never have an unnecessary hitch in my forehand, where men on the team

who play high up in the lineup do. They're strong enough to compensate. In a baseline game the girls have more of an advantage than they would in a service game. I tried to lose to him one time. I definitely threw that game on purpose.

Theme 3 – Men Fear Hurting Women: Tradition of Chivalry

Just as the male students spoke of holding back in contact sports with female players, female athletes confirmed that men are often unwilling to play as aggressively against them. Megan, a soccer player at Acorn, and Cate, a field hockey player at Legacy, shared anecdotes that speak to this theme.

Megan: I think every woman is a little bit feminist even if they are completely anti-feminist. They don't want to be associated with that trend for some reason, a lot of them, because they don't want to seem like they're coming on too strong or they're being too aggressive towards the male race. But I feel like we all need our chances ... and I'm not saying to strive for power in this world. But even with the little things ... like I love to play soccer. I always want to be the best person on the field and it doesn't matter who my opponent is. It doesn't matter if there's a boy or a girl I'm playing against. I still treat them as my equal opponent. I play co-ed intramural here. I don't want a guy ... like I've played against plenty of guys who are like, "Oh this is a girl. We're just going to go easy on her." No, I'm still going to foul you just as hard. And it *annoys* me. I want that respect on the field and I also want that to translate to real life. I want respect in real life as a woman.

Cate: I think that if a woman is faster and stronger than a man who's, you know, trying out for the same team ... if the woman on paper is better qualified then she should make the team over him, arguably. But I think this kind of goes into more issues of stereotypes about women just in general, being like emotional or whatever. I don't know, but I definitely believe men back off a little bit when they play against women because they just, I guess, they don't want to hurt them or something.

Again, the contradictory messages embedded in traditions of masculinity and chivalry (i.e. "Don't lose to a woman" and "Don't hurt a woman") put men who engage in co-ed sports in a difficult position. As Brian and Anthony stated, it often "depends on the girl." While some young women might embrace traditions of chivalry, I found that most of the female athletes I spoke with were more like Megan, who wanted men to play against them just as aggressively as they would their male opponents.

Theme 4 – In a Different Straitjacket: The Double Bind of the Female Athlete

In her groundbreaking and controversial book, *In a Different Voice* (1982), Carol Gilligan argued that women as a group experience the social world differently from men and, as a result,

process moral concepts in ways that diverge from the dominant paradigm of principled reasoning. With a nod to Gilligan's title, I argue that both men and women encounter gender dilemmas that confine them like a social straitjacket when it comes to sports. In contrast to the double bind faced by men caught between emasculation and bullying, women reported a different kind of double bind. They experienced pressure to perform what they perceived as two conflicting roles: (1) athlete; and (2) feminine persona. As athletes, they worked hard to perform at their highest level, which often involves strength training with weights. As women, they felt pressure to be thin and not "too muscular" in order to conform to mainstream beauty standards. In this and other ways, they felt that our society's gender roles put female athletes between a rock and a hard place. For male athletes, there is no conflict between building muscle and their gender roles as men. Building muscle is simply part of being an athlete. Building muscle is also part and parcel of being a "real man." However, it is *not* part of being a "feminine" woman. So, for female athletes, building "too much" muscle or muscle "in the wrong places" puts them at risk for being labeled "masculine" and therefore "unattractive" in the heterosexual marketplace. Gwen, a sophomore on the field hockey team at Legacy explains this common dilemma in the following excerpt:

Gwen: I know it's different on different teams. But it's almost like when we go in the weight room, we're like, "Oh, I don't want to go up any more weight. I don't want my legs to be bigger," like that kind of thing, because, I don't know, you're a girl. I don't want big arms or big legs. And field hockey notoriously squats a lot and has bigger thighs, which isn't culturally desirable, I would say. So, yeah, there's some of that. I would say only a few girls were really into lifting and wanting to get stronger. Others just do it because it's mandatory. I actually can't wait to never have to lift again so I can get skinnier and never have to do sprints, so I can just do cardio and, you know what I mean? So the athletic female body type is totally different from the male.

EM: So, how would you describe the athletic male body type in comparison?

Gwen: For male athletes I think ... well, for males in general, the ideal for a male athlete is the ideal for all males, which is different. So just you know, tall, cut, muscular. I guess unless you're a football linemen, which you just have to be enormous ... but yeah, just muscular, which is nice because they can approach all of their tasks, like for their team and for their personal image, in the same way.

EM: Right, so they're not limiting themselves in order to fit some other aesthetic ideal?

Gwen: Exactly! Whenever I think, like as a female athlete I'm constantly battling between: "Oh, man, I actually don't want to eat all these carbs for lunch but I'm going to be so hungry at practice if I don't," and like, "I really don't want

to lift but my coach would yell at me." I don't know. It's like, "Do I want to do well in the lift test and have a different body type than I want?" or "Do I want to look how I want to look and then maybe not be as good in my sport?"

EM: So, which one do you usually choose?

Gwen: I think now, because I'm kind of into fitness and nutrition, I am okay with lifting because I realize that it's not going to really bulk us up the way we do it. So I'm okay with it, but I still definitely shy away ... like I'm okay with making myself do it for the team but I'm not going to do it over the summer. You know what I mean?

Cate, a varsity athlete on the women's soccer team at Legacy, is a sociology major who conducted her junior research project on the subject of professional athletes and the cultivation of their public images. As this excerpt from our interview highlights, male athletes are automatically respected for their athletic performance, while female athletes are often stigmatized by their athletic skill.

Cate: For my independent work I interviewed professional athletes about how they present themselves whether they're ... you know while they're playing in games or while they're just fans at an event or, you know, just whenever they're out. What kind of presentation they focus on putting forth.

EM: And did gender come into that at all?

Cate: Yes, definitely. In my results I compared the men and the women. Some of the women I interviewed would talk about differences between ... for instance, the basketball players talked about how there's a big difference between the female basketball players and the male basketball players. So, the male basketball players, they can have all these cool highlights and they're faster and they're stronger ... and so they don't have to focus as much on ... well, the women focus more on their appearance because there's a negative stereotype about female basketball players. So they have to kind of ... the league tries to counteract that. And they're making some changes ... like their uniforms that they're wearing, they're changing.

EM: So how are the basketball uniforms changing for the females?

Cate: The shorts are more like soccer shorts.

EM: They're getting shorter?

Cate: Yeah, they're getting shorter. And the jerseys are racer back now. They're not like the bigger ones that they call tank jerseys. So, basically, the jerseys will be tighter and the shorts will be shorter.

EM: So what are your thoughts about that in terms of gender differences?

Cate: I feel like on the male side of things, the league would never change the uniforms to try to make them more revealing or, you know, to make the men appear more *manly*. Because on the converse, it's kind of to make the women appear more *feminine*. So, because it's not really necessary, because, you know, being athletic like that and using your strength in a game kind of speaks for itself for the men because that type of athleticism is just automatically associated with men and masculinity. But on the opposite side, being strong and athletic is *not* associated with femininity. So they have to work a little bit more to counteract that.

As Cate points out, the uniforms that female athletes are required to wear are often intended to symbolize a feminine persona rather than an athletic (or heroic) one. This has long been the case in sports such as tennis and field hockey, and it has increasingly become the case in sports such as basketball, soccer, and volleyball.

Theme 5 – Worth Their Salt: Female Athletes Must Prove Themselves

Another theme that came out of my interviews with female students was that they felt they had to work harder at their sport to prove themselves to their male coaches and male counterparts. They expressed a sense of gratification when it was clear they had earned respect by demonstrating their competence, as illustrated in the following excerpts from interviews with Stacey and Lena, both student-athletes at Legacy:

Stacey: As a kid, I played in a Tuesday group that was the high performance group. The coach had this group for maybe 10 years, didn't let any girls in until I myself and a girl a year older than me convinced him to let us in. There were 2 girls and 20 guys. Her name was Robin. He would call me Robin by accident and then realize and be like, "Oh, I mean Stacey." It wasn't that he didn't know my name. It was that his mind was everywhere and this was his first time girls were there.

It started like they would put us on court to warm up. I'd start out like I was on a court where I could beat the guys above me but he wouldn't necessarily put me there. As we got older I won a state title, he was huge about winning state titles because that's a good thing for getting publicity. He started to put me more where I belonged I guess.

There was another clinic. This one was more sexist. I didn't end up joining. They made me try out to join a clinic. For the most part, if you can pay the money and you have the ranking you can get in. At other clubs I'd gotten preferential treatment because of my ranking. Here he made me do a fitness test to see if I could get in. I ended up beating a guy in a sprint because at 15 they do have a gender advantage, but not if you're a super fit girl.

He ended up offering me a spot in the clinic. It was interesting because I had an ex-boyfriend who was in there and he asked me not to join. I didn't join for timing reasons and it was in the city. It was going to be a huge deal because I had friends who were good enough to play, female friends who were stereotypically just not allowed at all.

Lena: In my experience training with guys, a lot of the time you know it's hard for a guy to say like, "You're a silly female," when I can beat them in practice, you know. And so that would kind of change the dynamic a little bit between us, you know. So freshman year when I came to Legacy, I came from a pretty intense club team and so we had very, very hard practices in high school. And coming here I wouldn't say the practices were as hard, and so – especially in the beginning, I was able to beat a lot of people in the practice just because I was in such good shape and people who wouldn't necessarily be in the competition. And that sometimes included the guys on the male team. Some of them, it was not all that often, but you know for special practices. Or I go over there for a particular hard distance setter or something like that. And some of the guys, and I remember there were a couple of guys that I could beat, or I would just say, "I'm going to go and find you," or, "You need to let me go," and things like that.

And I think that would – I remember specifically one guy who had basically just changed the dynamic of the way we got to know each other because I think he sort of started to respect the girl a little bit more when she can say, “You know, I'm going in front of you, you're going too slow.” And yeah, in my experience, when I know I can beat a guy in practice, it makes me handle myself a little bit differently or a little more confidently and I won't get as much get flak from them for obvious reasons.

The experiences of these students demonstrate that the “separate spheres” model, which has informed sex-segregation in sports, begins to break down when women and girls are able to outperform men and boys. Stacey's sport, tennis, and Lena's sport, swimming, are both sports where athletes are more likely to practice in mixed-gendered groups (as compared with ice hockey or baseball, for example). As Brian pointed out on the subject of chivalry, our society's fear of hurting women mainly applies to contact sports. Thus, sports like tennis and swimming that do not involve physical contact with one's opponents, provide openings for greater gender parity not only on the court or in the lane, but also in social relations.

Discussion

Again, we see from these results that there are several similarities as well as a few key differences in how male and female students experience gender through sport. In total, 5 sport themes were described: (1) Men Claim Superior Strength/Poke Fun at Women's Sports; (2) Men Fear Losing to Women: Threat to Masculinity; (3) Men Fear Hurting Women: Tradition of Chivalry; (4) In a Different Straitjacket: The Double Bind of the Female Athlete; and (5) Worth Their Salt: Female Athletes Must Prove Themselves. The first three themes were described by students of both genders, while the latter two themes were unique to my interviews with female students. The common thread running throughout the first three themes is that a primary function of sport is the reproduction of masculinity in a hegemonic sense. The playing field serves as a site both literally and metaphorically for the cultural production and reproduction of gender norms. Just as the “ideal worker” is based on a separate spheres model in which men earn money and

women attend to domestic duties, the “ideal athlete” is based on an outdated model of sport in which women were excluded from competition. This model continues to inform sports today at the collegiate, professional, and international levels. While much has changed since the passage of Title IX in 1972, much remains the same, especially with regard to the symbolic role that sports play in our culture, which I discuss in the next section.

The Role of Society: Female Athletes as Pinups and Fashionistas

Looking at gender and sport at a macro level, the overarching theme that emerged from my research was the notion that sports is an arena for cultivating masculinity. Therefore, males experience pressure to participate in and excel at sports in order to conform to society’s gender scripts of what it means to “be a man.” Sport serves many functions in our society. As the students at Jackson lamented, their school did not have a football team, which they felt contributed to a general lack of school spirit among the student body. Indeed, one of the primary functions of sport in our society is to build a sense of community. Another primary function of sport in our society is to indoctrinate boys into becoming “men.” This is why epithets such as “don’t be a pussy” and “don’t be a bitch” are employed to shame boys and young men into actively engaging in sports. When we consider how strong the link between sport and masculinity remains in our culture, it highlights the dilemma faced by female athletes: where do they fit?

Returning to the metaphoric “straitjackets” that men and women find themselves in, male athletes are emasculated by losing to a woman, while female athletes are labeled “butch” if their bodies are “too muscular.” The underlying narrative here is that our society views male athletes as “heroes,” while female athletes are either rendered invisible or marketed as “hotties.” I call this the “Barbie/Bunny” phenomenon. In contrast to male athletes, who are usually depicted in action performing their sport, or in fixed poses that show off their muscles, female athletes are more likely

to be photographed modeling the latest fashions or in swimsuits posing in sexually provocative positions. Thus, images of male athletes tend to promote their identities as athletes first and citizens second, both categories emphasizing their status as “heroes.” Images of female athletes, on the other hand, tend to promote their identities as sexually desirable women first (i.e. “Bunny/Barbie”), while their identities as athletes come second. In *Built to Win*, Leslie Heywood and Shari Dworkin agree that “female athletes get a lot more press for such images than for their athletic performances” and emphasize that the production and consumption of these images impact our everyday experiences, identities, and thinking (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003). They note that in the summer and early fall 2000, sexually provocative images of female athletes were suddenly everywhere:

You know the ones: images of tennis player Anna Kournikova in *Sports Illustrated* lounging in Lolita-like longing on a bed; high jumper Amy Acuff with only the computer-generated wash of an American flag, placed strategically, to distinguish between her image and some of those on Kara’s Adult Playground; swimmer Jenny Thompson standing on the seashore in bright red boots, sporting magnificent thighs and a stars-and-stripes brief, fists clenched over naked but not visible breasts in *Sports Illustrated*; images of soccer player Brandi Chastain in the buff behind and around soccer balls in *Gear*, swimmers Dara Torres, Jenny Thompson, Angel Martino, and Amy Van Dyken naked behind the American flags in *Women’s Sports and Fitness*, and Amy Acuff again in *Esquire’s* “Girls of Summer.” (Ibid)

This trend continued in the media coverage of female skiers and snowboarders in the 2010 Winter Olympics. Indeed, the most visible athlete of the 2010 Winter Olympics was American downhill skier Lindsey Vonn, then 25, who appeared in a *Sports Illustrated* spread wearing only a bikini (tugging down on the bottom) and a Russian hat. Other female athletes who posed nearly nude for *Sports Illustrated* in 2010 include: snowboarder Clair Bidez, then 22, snowboarder Hannah Teter, then 22, aerial skier Lacy Schnoor (then 24), and snowboarder Gretchen Bleiler, then 29. Bleiler -- who bears a striking resemblance to the actress Hayden Panettiere of the TV show “Heroes” -- has also posed in her swimsuit for *Maxim* and *FHM*. As the 2010 Winter Olympics highlighted, female athletes who are willing to pose nude/nearly nude gain visibility, while those who do not meet the “Bunny/Barbie” beauty standard are marginalized.

The (Male) Athlete as Hero

The concept of athlete as “hero” dates back to Ancient Greece, when it was believed that “heroes” were descended from the gods and that athletes could attain divinity by proving themselves through sport and combat. The origin of this concept sheds light on modern readings of athletes as heroes and the gendered nature of this phenomenon. In *The Sociology of Sports* (2009), Tim Delaney and Tim Madigan outline eight sociological categories of sports heroes: (1) winners, (2) skilled performers, (3) social acceptability heroes, (4) group servants, (5) risk-takers, (6) reluctant heroes, (7) charismatic heroes, and (8) anti-heroes, noting that while professional athletes may be admired for a variety of reasons, all are considered “heroes” of one kind or another in American popular culture. In their 2005 study of American college students, Delaney and Madigan found that among those who identified sports heroes, 100% of the male students cited male sports heroes, while only 40% of the female students cited female sports heroes. This means that 80% of college students (all male and most female) think of men first when they think of “sports heroes.” Their findings counter speculation from earlier studies that predicted by the twenty-first century young women would cite female sports heroes in equal numbers as a result of Title IX legislation passed in 1972. Prior to Title IX, women were largely excluded from participation in sports, serving to reinforce socially constructed notions of men’s roles as “warriors” and women’s roles as “guardians of the hearth” in patriarchal societies. Although legally mandating that federally-funded athletic programs provide equal access to girls was an important first step towards achieving gender parity in sports, laws can only go so far in changing the culture. Delaney and Madigan’s finding that male college students universally cited male sports heroes, and that over half of female college students also cited male sports heroes, indicates that even for young people who came of age in the post-Title IX era, traditional gender ideology remains deeply embedded in their social world and in their thinking. Indeed, the notion of the

“athlete as hero” seems to apply universally for male athletes, but to a far lesser degree for female athletes.

If female athletes are not “heroes” to young men, and they are only sometimes “heroes” (or “sheroes”) to young women, to what social category do they belong? Images of female athletes were largely absent from popular culture until the 1990s, when corporations like *Reebok* and *Nike* launched media campaigns in an attempt to capitalize on the “women’s market” that had emerged in the post-Title IX era. While this new media focus on female athletes in the 1990s boosted attention and support for women’s sports, it was nevertheless market-driven. Heywood and Dworkin (2003) point out that the sports industry broadened its horizons not out of feminist motivations, but because they faced a stagnant market in men’s sports equipment and apparel. In their pursuit of the female consumer, they employed “empowerment rhetoric” reflecting feminist ideology, as depicted in *Nike*’s 1996 “If you let me play” campaign: “If you let me play/I will like myself more/I will have more self-confidence/I will suffer less depression/I will be 60 percent less likely to get breast cancer/I will be more likely to leave a man who beats me/I will be less likely to get pregnant before I want to/I will learn what it means to be strong/If you let me play sports.” (Heywood and Dworkin, 2003: 29). Just as Naomi Wolf (1990) argued that the “beauty myth” emerged as a “last, best belief system” to keep male dominance intact, I argue that “hero worship” of male athletes serves a similar purpose. Since women have broken down gender barriers in education, in the workplace, in marriage, and to some extent even in the military, sports remains one of the last bastions of male dominance symbolizing “masculinity.” This helps explain why sex segregation in sports persists, even though some girls/women are faster/stronger/more skilled than some boys/men. Rather than sorting athletes into groups based on ability, weight, and height,

sports teams separate players first by gender. I believe that this practice continues primarily to preserve “masculinity” at a symbolic level.

This sorting of athletes (or potential athletes) by sex rather than ability reflects not only the stubborn persistence of gender roles in American culture, but also our society’s habit of categorizing all things into binary groups. In *Deceptive Distinctions* (1988), Cynthia Epstein calls attention to our cultural preference for “dichotomous categories” including good/bad, dark/light, and masculine/feminine, and argues that such dichotomous categories serve to maintain the social order in a functionalist sense (Epstein, 1998: 13). Just as Durkheim argued that religious practices contributed to the stability of a society, Epstein argues that binary gender roles serve the function of self-maintenance in societies that are built on a “separate spheres model.” She asserts that, “culture and social structure interact in the creating of ‘sex typing,’ the linking of certain types of behavior with one sex or the other,” (Ibid: 101) which structures individuals’ choices. Further, the culture assigns a designation of “male” or “female” to a task and these cultural assignments become models which are translated into practice in patterned ways and are “monitored and controlled by gatekeepers and institutions in a position to permit or deny access to certain statuses, such as surgeon for a woman or nurse for a man” (Ibid: 102).

The Playboy Bunny as Cultural Icon

In 1963, Gloria Steinem, then a twenty-eight year old journalist (posing as a twenty-four year old to meet the age cutoff) exposed the dark side of Hugh Hefner’s *Playboy Club* in her now infamous exposé of the not-so-glamorous experience of waitresses (i.e. “Bunnies”) there. Although Steinem’s exposé revealed that working conditions for “Bunnies” at *The Playboy Club* were no better than your average cocktail waitressing gig (and in some ways worse), Hefner

nevertheless succeeded in marketing the image of the “Bunny” by capitalizing on postwar gender roles and heteronormative ideals of femininity. After all, the *Playboy* “Bunny” is essentially the “pinup girl” of the 1940s wearing the costume of the “Rockette” Broadway dancer, with the addition of bunny ears and tail to distinguish her as a *Playboy* product.

Despite the efforts of “anti-pornography” feminists, Hefner’s franchise grew into a multi-million dollar industry and the *Playboy* “Bunny” has become a cultural icon. The magazine remains a lucrative and widely circulated publication, which celebrities including Jayne Mansfield (1955), Linda Evans (1971), Kim Basinger (1983), Drew Barrymore (1995), and Lindsay Lohan (2012) have posed for. From an “anti-pornography” perspective, this is indeed a failure. From a “sex-positive” perspective, this could be read as women embracing their sexuality and expressing their agency. In the words of Kelly Bensimon of the reality TV show *The Real Housewives of New York City*, who posed for the cover in 2010, “Playboy is the stamp of approval that you’re a beautiful woman. At forty-one to be showing your boobs is a huge honor.” As Ariel Levy discusses in *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (2005), by the dawn of the twenty-first century a particular kind of pornography had infiltrated mainstream culture, a trend Levy labels “the rise of raunch culture.” Levy points out that young women coming of age today are immersed in this “raunch culture” without much (if any) exposure to feminist ideology. She argues, and I concur, that young women are duped into believing that “raunch culture” is “sex-positive” when in reality “raunch culture” is phallogentric, monolithic, and unimaginative. What would a “sex-positive” version of pornography look like, then? In my view, it would reflect what John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing* (1977), refers to as “nakedness” rather than “nudity,” the difference being that “nakedness” allows for agency, while “nudity” disguises and objectifies the subject for the purpose of consumption (historically for a male spectator). As Berger explains,

To be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. (The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object.) Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display. To be naked is to be without a disguise. ... The nude is condemned to never being naked. Nudity is a form of dress. In the average European oil painting of the nude the principal protagonist is never painted. He is the spectator in front of the picture and he is presumed to be a man. Everything is addressed to him. Everything must appear to be the result of his being there. It is for him that the figures have assumed their nudity. But he, by definition, is a stranger – with his clothes still on. (Berger, 1977: 54)

Indeed, the images of women in “soft” porn publications like *Playboy* most often depict women in the “nudist” tradition that Berger describes. Their images are intended for a heterosexual male audience to consume. The model’s body, her gaze, her dress (with nudity as a form of dress) are all addressed to him (the male consumer). She becomes a product rather than a person. The photograph of the “nude” is an image intended for mass consumption. It is not intended to reflect the woman’s own thoughts, personality, or sexual fantasies. Rather, it is intended to arouse a sense of ownership in the (hetero-male) viewer. Thus, the commodification of women’s bodies serves the function of maintaining both capitalism and patriarchy.

The concept of “the culture industry” in the work of Horkheimer and Adorno (1947) is useful here. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that, in late capitalism, “the culture industry” has co-opted all forms of creative expression and regurgitated them to the public for mass consumption. In other words, popular culture is essentially a factory churning out standardized products to render the masses docile and content. Under the hegemonic influence of “the culture industry,” citizens become consumers and art becomes propaganda. “But what is new is that the irreconcilable elements of culture, art and distraction, are subordinated to one end and subsumed under one false formula: the totality of the culture industry” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947: 136). Thus, repetition of themes (e.g. “Bunny” images) in the “culture industry” (which includes the mainstream porn industry) is part and parcel of late capitalism. In line with Horkheimer and Adorno’s theory of “the culture industry,” Naomi Wolf (1990) argues that the advertising industry created “the beauty myth” to replace “the feminine mystique” in order to save themselves from the

economic fallout of the women's revolution (Wolf, 1990: 66). Importantly, when the "feminine mystique" evaporated, women's magazines no longer served the function of promoting women's place in the domestic sphere, and thus "*all that was left was the body*" (Ibid: 67). Wolf notes that in the wake of second-wave feminism, as sales of British women's magazines dropped from 555.3 million to 407.4 million copies a year between 1965 and 1981, the number of diet-related articles in the popular press rose by 70% from 1968 to 1972, skyrocketing from 60 in the year 1979 to 66 in the month of January 1980 alone (Ibid). Similarly, in *Backlash* (1991), Susan Faludi calls attention to the power of the magazine industry to dictate feminine beauty ideals, noting that "athleticism, health, and vivid color are the defining properties of female beauty during periods when the culture is more receptive to women's quest for independence" (Faludi, 1991: 204). In contrast to the athletic beauty ideal of the 1910s and early 1920s (when the suffrage movement was at its peak) that reappeared in the 1970s (during second-wave feminism), the beauty aesthetic of the 1980s emulated the "cult of invalidism" of the late Victorian era, with models becoming paler and thinner (coinciding with the era of anti-feminist "backlash"). Thus, beauty ideals ebb and flow over time, and appear to be correlated with the ebbs and flows of feminism's place in our culture.

Female Athletes as Bunnies and Fashionistas

In contrast to the "female empowerment" rhetoric employed by the sports industry in the 1990s, the rhetoric of male-athlete-as-hero seems to have taken center stage once again in the twenty-first century. As demonstrated in the June 2012 issue of *Vogue* magazine – entitled, "Team USA: America's Olympic Hopefuls," what we are seeing so far is an increased tendency to frame the body of the male athlete as strong/active/heroic and the body of the female athlete as sexualized/fashionable/feminine. The cover of the magazine features a shirtless man wearing navy

knee-length board shorts (highlighting his muscled chest) with a woman on each arm, both dressed in sparkling gold one-piece bathing suits, long hair flowing in the breeze. The man on the cover is Ryan Lochte (swimmer) and the two women are Hope Solo (soccer player) and Serena Williams (tennis player). Strikingly, Ryan Lochte takes center stage as the “hero” in this scene, while Hope Solo and Serena Williams are positioned as his “trophy” or “arm candy” in the photograph. It is also worth mentioning that while the male athlete’s apparel is consistent with his sport (he is a swimmer wearing a functional swimsuit), the two female athletes’ apparel takes them out of the context of their respective sports (not only would they not play soccer or tennis in these swimsuits, but their mobility would also be limited by the fashion of the suits were they to attempt swimming). Further, though two female athletes grace the cover and the caption speaks of “Team USA,” the main feature *inside* the magazine is a lengthy spread (by renowned photographer Annie Leibovitz) in which only the top *male* athletes are celebrated, each posing heroically in sports attire accompanied not by a female athlete, but by a professional fashion model posing in elaborate costumes. There are a handful of photographs of female athletes peppered throughout the magazine, but their exclusion from the Annie Leibovitz photo shoot symbolizes their marginalization in the narrative of “Team USA” as captured by the primary visual text of “male athlete/hero” accompanied by “female fashion model/muse.”

I argue that because the “Bunny/Barbie” beauty ideal featured in fashion publications like *Vogue* and soft porn publications like *Playboy* promotes a particular aesthetic, women who do not meet (or strive to meet) this beauty standard are marginalized as a result of their underexposure. Women of all races are measured against an unrealistic beauty standard, which inevitably impacts their social experiences in myriad contexts, whether or not they seek to conform to it. The case of the Williams sisters is an interesting example. Both Williams sisters are famous for bringing their

“red carpet” fashions onto the tennis court. Both sisters have been groundbreakers in their sport and have encountered pressure to be role models to young girls, especially young women of color. Both sisters have dabbled in the business of fashion and have been self-promoting in both tennis and in their fashion endeavors. Yet, Venus Williams, with her long lithe body and more “feminine” on-court demeanor, continued to be the poster girl for U.S. women’s tennis long after her performance began slipping, while her sister Serena Williams, whose body and on-court demeanor fail to fit the “Bunny/Barbie” ideal, was less embraced by the media despite her dominance on the tennis court. Instead, corporate sponsors embraced players like the Serbian Ana Ivanovic and Russian-American Maria Sharapova (both white players), whose looks aligned with the “Bunny/Barbie” ideal, even when Serena Williams was clearly dominating on the tennis court.

By 2015, however, the year that Serena Williams won three of the four major tennis grand slams, she succeeded in outshining her sister (and her former media rivals) through corporate sponsorship. In an ad for Chase Bank, we see Serena chasing down balls in a “practice” session in which she is made up to look as though she is ready to step onto a movie set. In the ad, her makeup is flawless, her normally curly hair has been straightened and appears much longer and shinier than in real life, and her nails are painted blue (Chase Bank’s color) and look like she just came from the manicurist. What is most striking, however, is her clothing. On court, Serena Williams is indeed particular about her appearance. She is known for wearing bright colors, large earrings, and in recent years bringing a more urban aesthetic to her on-court fashions. In contrast, the all-white tennis dress that Serena wears in the ad is long-sleeved and conservative. She also does not appear to be wearing her usual spandex shorts underneath the tennis skirt, as she does when she competes on the world stage. Despite the fact that she appears to be playing in a warm climate, and that she normally plays in sleeveless attire, the white dress fully covers her arms. This

is not an accident. Serena Williams is famous for having the fastest serve in women's tennis, and for having the muscular arms to show for it. However, muscular arms are associated with "masculinity" and do not align with the "feminine" image that her corporate sponsors are trying to project. Hence, the choice to cover up her muscles with a more "ladylike" dress. The other aspect of the Chase advertisement that is striking is that Serena is visibly winded after chasing a few tennis balls, and stops to lean on her racket and catch her breath before continuing the practice. This is worth noting, as it is something we don't see from the real-life Serena on court when she competes in Grand Slams. It is also significant because it's something we don't see in tennis commercials featuring her male counterparts (e.g. Andy Murray, Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic). In contrast, the male players are shown moving at rapid speed, making epic plays, and raising their fists in the air when they win points. The following excerpt from my interview with Stacey at Legacy speaks to the phenomenon of female players garnering attention based primarily on their looks:

Stacey: Do you know who Ana Ivanovic is?

EM: Yes, she's a brunette?

Stacey: She's a Serb. I say that because part of her identity is coming up at the same time as Jelena Jankovic, Novak Djokovic who are Serbians. She was ranked number one at the time but never won a grand slam. She was focused, she wasn't a Kournikova. But the guy tennis players I knew, whenever they mentioned her it was because she was gorgeous.

EM: Yes, that's why I know her.

Stacey: She wasn't taken seriously and in that regard I feel bad for her because that wasn't her intention. I feel bad to a large degree but the large part is you're getting sponsored largely because of your looks. You're ranked number one but if she had the same success that Serena had, her endorsements could have been higher because she was a pretty girl. I feel bad for you but not quite as bad.

In *Missing Bodies* (2009), Casper and Moore ask, "What types of bodies become iconic of a certain kind of American national identity, and how is this produced?" (Casper and Moore, 2009: 18). Although the Miss America Pageant may no longer hold the cultural cachet it once did, the perpetual beauty contest among American women has escalated to new heights in the era of

twenty-four hour “news” coverage, celebrity obsession, reality TV, and self-exposure via social media. I argue that the type of body that has maintained its iconic stature in American national identity since the late 1940s is that of the “Bunny/Barbie,” with the “Bunny” model dominating in publications that target heterosexual male audiences and the “Barbie” model dominating in publications that target female audiences. Both “Bunny” and “Barbie” are typically white, long-limbed, and have blonde hair. What distinguishes them is that the “Bunny” has larger breasts (usually surgically enlarged) and wider hips, while the “Barbie” conforms to a more waifish, fashion-model aesthetic. In Weberian terms “Bunny” and “Barbie” are “ideal types” rather than attainable standards. Indeed, as many feminists have argued, these Western beauty ideals are in fact unattainable in real life. It is standard operating procedure in the magazine industry to alter images of women through airbrushing, a practice which emphasizes that even women who seem to fit the “Bunny/Barbie” beauty standard fall short of perfection.

I argue that because female athletes don’t receive the same level of respect *as athletes* that their male counterparts receive, many attempt to gain social status through whatever means are available to them. Although sports have become more accessible to girls and women since the passage of Title IX in 1972, media coverage of sports is still largely limited to *men’s* sports, at both the collegiate and professional levels. Further, male athletes are more likely than female athletes to receive corporate sponsorship, which provides additional income through print and TV advertising. Male athletes are also more likely to transition into careers as sports commentators once they’ve retired from competition. Since the careers of athletes are inherently short (most retire by their early 30s), finding additional sources of revenue to secure their financial future is a legitimate concern. For female athletes in a male-dominated system, athletic skill by itself is not enough to guarantee their long-term financial security. Bourdieu’s distinctions between various

forms of capital is useful here. Since beauty is a form of cultural capital that translates into economic capital, female athletes who fit the “Bunny/Barbie” aesthetic are understandably tempted to capitalize on this asset if they possess it. Bourdieu (1988) also stated that women are “perceived beings” who are judged by their appearance and mannerisms to a greater extent than men. In line with Bourdieu’s take on gender and appearance, Naomi Wolf (1990) argued that beauty is a “currency system” embedded in power relations. As women gained equality in the workplace in the latter half of the twentieth century, the “beauty myth” emerged as a last-ditch effort to keep male dominance intact.

In assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves. (Wolf, 1990: 12)

Though not a sociologist, Wolf views “beauty” as a social construction that remains in flux as power relations shift and history unfolds. Like “anti-pornography” feminists, she believes the “beauty myth” promotes a standard of femininity that is damaging to women’s physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. And in the spirit of “sex-positive” feminism, she articulates a feminist vision of beauty that is “woman-loving” and “sexual, various, and surprising” (Wolf, 1990: 291).

Perhaps by the end of the twenty-first century female athletes will have achieved an “equal playing field” with their male counterparts and their “choices” will no longer be informed by disparity in economic/social/cultural capital relative to male athletes. For now, their propensity to perform gendered “Bunny/Barbie” public personas remains embedded in a system of inequality that privileges males over females. As Judith Butler (1990) famously argued, gender is not an essence but a stylized performance. Thus, female athletes *perform* their gender through their manner of speech, their style of dress, their demeanor on the red carpet, and their scantily clad

photographs in “soft” porn publications. By conforming to the “Bunny/Barbie” ideal type, they gain increased visibility which translates into enhanced cultural and economic capital. The public pays more attention to female athletes when they take their clothes off or when they perform the role of “fashionista” on the red carpet (or take the red carpet into the field of sport) than when female athletes simply excel at their sport. The media also gives more coverage to female athletes who fit the “Bunny/Barbie” type than it gives to those who either physically don’t fit the beauty standard or fail to perform a feminine gender role. Indeed, as Casper and Moore (2009) argue, only certain bodies are considered worthy of celebration in the U.S., while others are erased or denied.

Chapter Three: “Rape Culture: A Collegiate and National Crisis”

Introduction: Rape Culture: What is it?

One of the key themes that emerged from my interviews with students was the prevalence of “rape culture” on college campuses, both within the context of student life, as well as at the institutional level. By rape culture, I mean the social norms and values that inform and constrain discourses around the subject of sexual assault. Rape culture effectively normalizes patterns of hegemonic male aggression towards women and perpetuates victim-blaming²¹ attitudes. I argue that the phenomenon of rape culture on college campuses in the U.S. operates within a framework of hegemonic masculinity. College women are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault, yet we know that college men are also survivors. A 2007 study found that 20% of college females and 6.1% of college males are victims of sexual assault (Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., and Martin, S.L., 2007). Survivors of both genders are reluctant to report the assaults for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons males are reluctant to come forward is that to be in the position of the victim/survivor is to be in a position associated with women. As Andrew, a male student at Legacy, described his experience of gender socialization, he was taught as a child that, “One: Being a girl is bad. Two: Don’t be like a girl. And Three: Being a girl means having emotion, crying, displaying weakness in any fashion.” These gender norms, based on a binary model of “masculine/feminine,” were still extremely salient for the college students I interviewed between 2010-2014, particularly in the arenas of self-presentation and sexual practice.

²¹ I use the terms “victim” and “survivor” interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

In a society (like ours) that emphasizes physical strength, aggression, and sexuality as the key attributes for achieving manhood, the cultural hegemony of masculinity serves as the foundation for rape culture. Scholars in the field of masculinity studies have identified 11 distinct factors that they use to measure conformity to hegemonic masculinity. This tool, which they call the “Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory” (CMNI), consists of the following behaviors and values: (1) Winning, (2) Emotional Control, (3) Risk-Taking, (4) Violence, (5) Dominance, (6) Playboy, (7) Self-Reliance, (8) Primacy of Work, (9) Power Over Women, (10) Disdain for Homosexuals, and (11) Pursuit of Status (Mahalik et al., 2003). A pioneer in the field of masculinity studies, O’Neil (1986) argued that conformity to masculine social norms inhibited men’s development and health in myriad ways. Since then, several decades of research have confirmed that adherence to the CMNI has negative consequences to men’s physical, psychological, emotional, and relational health (Kilmartin, 2010; Courtenay, 2011; Way, 2011; Smiler, 2013). Research utilizing the CMNI has found that hypermasculinity is associated with sexual and physical aggression towards women (Mosher and Anderson, 1986; Parrott and Zeichner, 2003). Michael Kimmel has also produced much scholarship in this field, and notes that conformity to masculine norms is especially pronounced among males between the ages of 16-26 (Kimmel, 2008).

As the research in the field of masculinity studies shows, the social norms and values embedded in the culture of masculinity are not innate to those born biologically male. On the contrary, these traits and behaviors must be learned, enforced, and re-enforced over time and through rigorous processes of gender socialization, which begin at birth, and intensify as boys reach adolescence. From a functionalist perspective, the *function* of masculinity is to protect and maintain the social order. This social order is based on a gendered division of labor that emerged

in the U.S. during the industrial era when men were pulled into factory work, while women continued to perform domestic labor and were called upon to take childrearing to new heights. The gendered social order is not fixed but in flux, as sociologists who have studied longitudinal rates of women's labor force participation have shown (Acemoglu et al., 2004; Goldin, 2006; Lee and Mather, 2008). Once we understand the social norms and values that are ingrained in the culture of masculinity, we can better understand how and why rape culture persists into the twenty-first century.

When we look at rape at a macro level, research shows that one in five women will be sexually assaulted in four years away at college (Krebs et al., 2007). Most often, it happens her freshman or sophomore year. In the great majority of cases (75-80%), she knows her attacker, whether as an acquaintance, classmate, friend or (ex)boyfriend (Ibid). Many are survivors of what's called "incapacitated assault": they are sexually abused while drugged, drunk, passed out, or otherwise incapacitated. We also find patterns of rape occurring at higher levels among certain groups such as fraternities. One study found that men in fraternities are 300% more likely to rape than other college men and that women in sororities are 74% more likely to experience rape than other college women (Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, and Luthra, 2005). Likewise, all-male "high risk" sports teams have higher rates of rape than the general male population (Humphrey and Kahn, 2000). The most insidious part of rape culture is its omnipresence. The "blue light" system²² on college campuses, while intended to provide safety and security for students, also has the effect of constantly reminding women of their vulnerability. Kristin, a Whitney student who belongs to a

²² The "blue light" system is a "stranger-danger" based response to sexual assault in which call boxes with a button to press for emergency assistance are marked by blue lights. These call boxes are scattered around campus.

sorority, said her biggest concern related to gender equality is the threat of being assaulted, as she explains in this passage:

Kristin: In terms of gender equality, if you're walking home as a girl at night, leaving the library is a lot scarier than walking home if you're a guy. You would want to ask a guy friend to walk home with you or something like that. And I don't know how that can really be changed, but it definitely sucks that you have to have that in the back of your mind just because you're a female.

The awareness that women possess that we could at any time become a victim of rape is one aspect of rape culture.²³ This component is the more obvious one. The other facet of rape culture, which is less obvious, but equally problematic, is the manner in which rape gets talked about after a rape has occurred. Who frames the conversation about rape? How does the history of women's exclusion from citizenship inform power relations between men and women in the present? How do these power relations inform discursive practices? For Foucault, discursive practice refers to a historically and culturally specific set of rules for organizing and producing different forms of knowledge. These rules allow certain statements to be made. Foucault's concept of discursive practice is a useful tool in understanding how rape culture works. Questions such as, "What was she wearing?", "Was she drinking?", "Did she like him?", "Did she kiss him?", "Did she go to his room?", are examples of statements that are allowed to be made in rape culture, statements that clearly put the onus on the victim rather than the perpetrator in a case of male-on-female rape. These are statements/questions that have historically been asked in conversations surrounding rape in public spaces, in the media, in the courtroom, and even in the classroom. The effect of such victim-blaming statements on women is the internalization of rape culture. Women who become victims of rape know that (1) they may not be believed, (2) they may be blamed for their own rape, or (3) even if they are believed, they may be shamed for it. Victim-blaming statements have the

²³ See Brownmiller, 1975.

effect of silencing not only victims (both female and male), but also women as a group (because we are well aware of the rules and we know we don't make them) as well as men who object to rape culture rules.

As a number of my informants indicated, date-rape drugs being given to women without their knowledge is a social problem on college campuses. This is in fact more than a social problem. It is also a crime. The topic of sexual assault has recently received increased media focus due to both scandals at elite prep schools²⁴ and famous men such as Bill Cosby and Woody Allen²⁵ being publicly called out on allegations of rape and sexual molestation. Since completing my interviews in 2014, the Bill Cosby case has brought the issue of drugging women for the purpose of raping them to the nation's attention, with 46 women coming forward, and 35 of them telling their stories and posing on the cover of *New York* magazine in July 2015. President Obama responded to demands that Cosby be stripped of his Presidential Medal of Honor by stating that although there was no mechanism in place to do so, he condemned giving drugs to anyone without their knowledge and called it rape. Cosby himself admitted in 2005 to the act of drugging women and justified his actions by stating that to him it was no different than giving a woman alcohol to "get her in the mood." For the President of the United States to clarify in no uncertain terms that drugging people for the purpose of having sex is, in fact, rape sets an important precedent.

²⁴ Coincidentally, at the time of this writing in 2015-2016, two elite high schools in NH (my native state, to which I returned to write up my findings) were at the center of controversy for student-on-student rape at St. Paul's Academy in Concord, NH and multiple reports of teacher-on-student sexual assault at Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, NH.

²⁵ Woody Allen's son, Ronan Farrow, recently wrote an article, "My Father, Woody Allen, and the Danger of Questions Unasked," as a guest column in *The Hollywood Reporter*, 05/11/16. In the article Farrow links the media's treatment of his famous father to that of Bill Cosby. He also reflects on his own complicity in rape culture from the vantage point of a journalist, an attorney, the brother of a survivor, and the son of a perpetrator. He confirms that the charges of sexual assault against Mr. Allen were never dropped, but that the decision not to continue proceedings was made by Mia Farrow in order to protect her daughter, Dylan Farrow, from further traumatization.

As I will argue in this chapter, institutions play a role in perpetuating or ending traditions that are harmful to its citizens. Notably, the federal government has stepped up in the last couple of years to address this issue. On January 22, 2014 President Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum establishing the White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault. Both he and Vice President Joe Biden (who has long supported legislation to end violence against women) released statements on the subject:

Sexual violence is more than just a crime against individuals. It threatens our families, it threatens our communities; ultimately, it threatens the entire country. It tears apart the fabric of our communities. And that's why we're here today -- because we have the power to do something about it as a government, as a nation. We have the capacity to stop sexual assault, support those who have survived it, and bring perpetrators to justice.

--President Barack Obama, January 22, 2014

Freedom from sexual assault is a basic human right... a nation's decency is in large part measured by how it responds to violence against women... our daughters, our sisters, our wives, our mothers, our grandmothers have every single right to expect to be free from violence and sexual abuse.

--Vice President Joe Biden, January 22, 2014

In April 2014, the Task Force released a report entitled, "Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault," outlining the nation-wide epidemic of sexual assault on college campuses. Its main goals include helping universities respond effectively when a student is assaulted and improving (and making more transparent) the federal government's enforcement efforts. Then, in May 2014, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) released a list of higher education institutions²⁶ under investigation for possible violations of federal law (Title IX) over the handling of sexual violence and harassment complaints. Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Catherine E. Lhamon stated,

We are making this list available in an effort to bring more transparency to our enforcement work and to foster better public awareness of civil rights. We hope this increased transparency will spur community dialogue about this important issue. I also want to make it clear that a college or university's appearance on this list and being the subject

²⁶ The original list, released in May 2014 included 124 universities. As of May 2016 there are now 184 universities under federal investigation by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights for alleged violations of Title IX related to the handling of sexual violence.

of a Title IX investigation in no way indicates at this stage that the college or university is violating or has violated the law.²⁷

Coupled with the OCR's investigation, new legislation called the "Campus Accountability & Safety Act" is currently being proposed by a bipartisan group of 36 Senators to protect students and increase accountability and transparency at institutions of higher learning. The legislation would do the following:

1. Establish new campus resources and support services for student survivors.
2. Ensure that college and university staff meet minimum training standards to address sexual assault cases.
3. Create historic transparency requirements to provide students, parents and officials with an accurate picture of the problem, and of how campuses are addressing it.
4. Require a uniform student disciplinary process across campuses, and coordination with law enforcement.
5. Incentivize colleges and universities to address the problem by establishing enforceable Title IX penalties and stiffer penalties for Clery Act violations.²⁸

One of the schools in my study is among the 184 colleges and universities under investigation for possible violations of federal law (Title IX) over the handling of sexual violence and harassment complaints. At the time my interviews ended in 2014, two of the four schools in my study had programs in place to address campus sexual assault. Notably, both were Northern schools, while neither of the schools in the South had a university-driven program to address sexual violence. Both of the anti-violence programs in this study employed a prevention-based approach in addressing sexual assault at their schools. At Acorn, the anti-violence program had been in place

²⁷<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-releases-list-higher-education-institutions-open-title-ix-sexual-violence-investigations> (accessed on May 20, 2016).

²⁸ <http://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/campus-sexual-assault> (accessed on May 20, 2016).

for nearly twenty-five years when I visited. At Legacy, the program was in its second year at the time of my visit.

Rape Culture as an expression of Hegemonic Masculinity

The message of rape culture is essentially this: Boys will be boys. Boys (especially those who are white, wealthy, athletic, and/or academically successful) are expected to “sow their wild oats” while they are young men. This means they are both “entitled” to and expected to engage in sexual activity that is *detached* from their emotions. As the research on masculinity has demonstrated (O’Neil, 1986, 2008; Mahilik et al., 2003; Addis, 2010; Norwalk et al., 2011), restricted emotions, sex disconnected from intimacy, and the pursuit of achievement and status are important goals for males as they transition to becoming “real men” in a hypermasculine culture. In this context, a young woman is not thought of as an equal partner in a sexual encounter, but rather as (in the best case scenario) a distributor of an accolade that is to be awarded to the most heroic of men. As a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood, young men are expected to prove their sexual virility, and hence their masculinity, by engaging in casual sex with multiple female partners. The more sexual partners they have, the more sexually virile they are perceived to be. Not only are young men encouraged to be sexually promiscuous, but they are also socialized to adopt a “warrior” mentality. The rituals and rules that constitute gender socialization for boys as they embark upon adolescence create an environment in which sexuality is packaged with aggression. As Andrew, my male informant at Legacy reflected:

Andrew: My basic intuition is that it’s actually pretty difficult to get people to feel oppressive social rules. We’re not very good at it and it doesn’t come easily which is why when boys are socialized you have to constantly berate, shame, or abuse them in order to get them to fit into the model of outward masculine expression in order to turn them into people who will be viable oppressors of women. That’s like every step of their maturation process.

When you’re a child being taught that: 1) being a girl is bad and 2) don’t be like a girl and 3) being a girl means having emotion, crying, displaying weakness in any fashion, caring about other people. Looking back it feels like it was a rigorous indoctrination process from lots of different directions and one that is very traumatizing for lots of people,

particularly men who don't fit into that narrative as easily. The overwhelming majority of homophobic insults used in high schools are directed by straight men to other straight men in order to get them to sort of police each other to fill those roles properly.

Importantly, rape culture serves not only to “keep women in their place” but also to “keep men in their place.” Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power is relevant here, as it applies to the production and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity, the driving force behind rape culture. For Foucault, “discipline is a mechanism of power which regulates the behavior of individuals in the social body. This is done by regulating the organization of space, of time, and people's activity and behavior. It is enforced with the aid of complex systems of surveillance” (Foucault, 1978). Surveillance takes many forms. Males learn about what it means to be a man from family members, from the media, from peers, and from various institutions (or “regimes of practice”) including schools, religion, and the military-industrial complex. From a Foucauldian perspective, power and knowledge are derived from observation of others. As such, young men gain power and knowledge by imitating (and thus reproducing) behaviors they observe among their male peers, which they learn from the aforementioned regimes of practice. They are surveilled by their peers, by family elders, by coaches, by teachers, and by cameras. In the modern age of smartphones, social media, and video surveillance, Foucault’s metaphor of the “Panopticon” is more relevant than ever. The population of boys learning how to perform their gender (Butler, 1990) under surveillance thus conforms to pre-established heteronormative notions of masculinity.

What does rape culture look like on campus?

Examples of rape culture that arose from my interviews and observations include: (i) male-dominated leadership in selective social clubs (SSCs); (ii) narrowly framed, male-dominated classroom discussion on the subject of rape, coupled with female students’ fear of speaking up; (iii) a female student at elite university being told to be quiet by a faculty member when sharing

data on incidences of sexual assault in response to a question asked at first-year orientation; (iv) reports of fraternities sponsoring theme parties and hazing rituals that objectify and sexually exploit women; (v) reports of fraternities spiking drinks with date-rape drugs; (vi) feedback from students that victims of drugging at fraternity parties did not report the incidents to the police or to university officials; and (vii) pervasiveness of male-dominated hookup culture as the social norm, especially at elite schools.

With respect to male-dominated leadership in SSCs, I found this to be especially salient at Legacy University. Legacy's Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women's Leadership published a report in 2011 that examined women's leadership roles in various aspects of student life including SSCs and student government. The data indicated that among its undergraduate population, male students far outpaced female students in holding positions of leadership, particularly those at the top of the hierarchy. One of the key findings of the report was that women occupied more visible leadership positions in the earlier years of co-education, from the 1980s-1990s than they did between 2000 – 2010. While women's representation in top leadership positions steadily increased from 9% in the 1970s to 26% in the 1980s to 31% in the 1990s, it had dropped to just 17% for the first decade in the 2000s. In line with these findings, my informants who belonged to SSCs reported that most of the officer positions were filled by male students, while female officers were fewer in number and were also more likely to fill lower-ranking positions within the leadership team such as Vice President and Social Chair. Here two students, Ellen, a senior, and Amanda, a junior and an officer in her SSC, describe the gender dynamics in SSC leadership at Legacy:

Ellen: Anecdotally, I don't think there are too many clubs that have female presidents or female leadership of any kind. The one that I'm in currently, the president is male. In the past, it's the vice president who's usually been a female and I think that's the case this year as well but I'm blanking on who it is. Usually a social chair is a woman, which I think tends to a bit stereotypical as well of social clubs and campus groups more generally.

Amanda: I think that I can use my social club as an example of gender inequality. My SSC is very much a male-dominated club. It was actually the last one to allow women in it, which wasn't until 1992 or something because they lost the lawsuits. So they were forced to let girls in which is not good. I'm not proud of that. There is a traditional norm within the club. The guys are always like, "We're dudes, yeah!" We have one female student officer which I think we're the only club on the entire campus of all the clubs that does.

EM: I thought you said you're an officer?

Amanda: Yeah, I'm the only one.

EM: You're the only one?

Amanda: Next year I get to live with five guys.

EM: Okay. You live together, I didn't realize that.

Amanda: Yes, you become an officer your junior year and then you live in the club your senior year. Yeah, I think that is an example of where this gender norm, women's equality isn't there yet. I feel like a main drive for that lack of total equality that still exists is the tradition within the club. I guess maybe not so much values but traditions of the club and that sort of thing have always been male-dominated until a little over ten years ago. We're slowly getting there. We're definitely getting more girls in the clubs, becoming more fifty-fifty. We're not there yet but it's just a slow change that will happen over time, like with everything else.

Despite the 2011 report that found that women were heavily underrepresented in positions of leadership at Legacy, and the recommendation by the Steering Committee on Undergraduate Women's Leadership that the university increase mentoring for its female students, at the time of my interviews in 2014, there was no formal "Women's Leadership" program in place. Neither did I find such a program at Jackson University. In contrast, both Acorn University and Whitney University had well-established comprehensive "Women's Leadership" programs in place, not necessarily to encourage its female students to fill positions in student government (or in SSCs), but to address the dearth of women in leadership positions in U.S. society in general.

Most people would agree that victims of rape (and other forms of sexual assault) are harmed by the crimes committed against them. By the same token, most people would agree that persons accused of committing crimes they did not commit are harmed as well (albeit differently).

In rape culture, the concern for possible harm done to those falsely accused of rape far outweighs the concern for harm done to those who have been raped. I witnessed this phenomenon play itself out in a class of undergraduate sociology students at Legacy when the professor asked the class to respond to a *New York Times* story of a well-known college athlete accused of rape. Despite the fact that the female students in the room outnumbered the male students by about two to one, only one female spoke at the beginning of the class discussion. For the remainder of a class discussion that lasted about twenty minutes, only the male students spoke, most of them expressing concern for the reputation and career of the athlete in the news story. The conversation was framed within the parameters of rape culture, focusing predominantly on the difficulty of proving rape, with undertones of victim-blaming, and comments questioning the credibility and reputation of the woman who reported she had been raped. At no point in the class discussion did anyone ask, “What if she’s telling the truth?” Instead, the conversation seemed to be framed in a context that already took the following logic for granted: 1) Athletes are rich and famous; 2) Women who accuse rich and famous athletes of rape are lying to try to get their money and become famous.

Later I interviewed six female students from the class. Every one reported dissatisfaction with the framing of the rape topic in class, coupled with a fear of speaking up due to the prevalence of rape culture attitudes. As Stacey, one of the students from this class, explained:

Stacey: I didn’t want to speak in that conversation, because that’s a topic [rape] I either disengage from or I really engage in it. That conversation felt like it was going to be brief and it wasn’t going to touch the larger issue. I didn’t want to necessarily engage on that level. As far as the gender roles go, I don’t know if it’s because football teaches you ... these male sports that are on TV, they teach you that you’re larger than life so you think you can get away with a lot. They’re taught [male athletes] that they can get away with things. They can.

It is significant that Stacey and her female classmates shared these kinds of sentiments in one-on-one interviews where they were guaranteed confidentiality, but did not share these views in class that day, despite the fact that there were fewer males than females in the room. As Foucault would

say, these students were practicing “self-discipline” through self-censorship since the regimes of practice were already in place prior to the introduction of the rape topic in class. Using a Foucauldian analysis of discursive practice, I argue that the cultural hegemony of masculinity embedded in the framing of conversations about rape in media discourse and in legal discourse informs how citizens (in this case students) in turn frame how they talk about rape and other forms of sexual assault.

In my interviews with students, one of the most frequently cited sources of rape culture was the Greek system (and at Legacy this was the SSC system). At some schools, co-ed selective social clubs have emerged as alternatives to sex-segregated fraternities and sororities. This was the case at both of the elite institutions in my sample. And at one of the state schools, some of the fraternities had gone co-ed. Yet reports of sexual assault and rape culture attitudes persisted within these selective social groups, despite their mixed-gender membership. When we consider that the fraternity is the model on which both sororities and co-ed selective social clubs are based, this is not altogether surprising. The fraternity model is one that promotes the tenets of hypermasculinity, as described by Mosher and Serkin (1984): (1) callous sexual attitudes toward women, (2) the belief that violence is manly, and (3) the experience of danger as exciting. Fraternities have long garnered attention in the media for their danger-seeking activities, and have more recently been in the news²⁹ for their callous sexual attitudes toward women. As the White House has recently called upon universities to take sexual assault crimes seriously, and anti-rape campaigns (e.g. “Take Back the Night”) have made progress, we are seeing backlash by fraternities around the

²⁹ See Flanagan, 2014.

country. In August 2015, on the first day of fall semester drop-offs, some fraternities hung sexually harassing banners from their balconies with rape-threatening statements including:

--"Rowdy and fun. Hope your baby girl is ready for a good time."

--"Freshman daughter drop off."

--"Go ahead and drop off Mom, too."

--"Thanks, fathers. We'll take it from here."

--"Thank you fathers for your freshman daughters."

--"She called you Daddy for 18 years. Now it's our turn."³⁰

While I was not witness to such blatant rape threats by fraternity members at any of the schools I visited, I did hear reports of students being drugged at fraternity parties. Mary, one of my informants in her freshman year at Whitney, told me that she was drugged at a fraternity party earlier that year. She was fortunate that a friend noticed and helped her get home safely. After the party, she learned that there were a number of other victims, all of whom drank the punch served by the fraternity, and that it was speculated the punch had been spiked with date-rape drugs. In spite of her own experience and her knowledge that there were many other victims, she did not report the incident to the university or the police, citing athletes as "untouchables" whom the university has a reputation for protecting from rape charges.

Mary: I actually was drugged earlier this year, at a frat party, so that.. yeah, so definitely, sexual assault here is a large issue that a lot of girls don't come forward and talk about just because, you know, these people.. and a lot of the abusers.. I don't want to make like a gross generalization, but from what I hear, a lot of the abusers are athletes and sort of this untouchable, these untouchable people that you can't sort of go after. Even if you did, the university probably may not deal with it the same way that, you know, maybe it should had they been normal students.

EM: In your situation, how did you piece together what it was that was going on? What was your response to it?

Mary: I drank the punch. Never drink the punch. I learned it the hard way. They had put Xanax in it. Luckily I had a friend there who was sober and was able to take me home but everyone who drank the punch the next day was like.. we.. I didn't remember what happened, no one remembered what happened. And then it somehow came out they had

³⁰ <http://mic.com/articles/124331/these-disturbing-first-day-of-school-banners-reveal-fraternity-rape-culture-at-its-worst> (accessed September 2, 2015).

spiked it with Xanax. Now whether that's 100% factually accurate, I don't know, but I had like half of the solo cup of the mix and I was gone, I could not remember the entire night after that point.

EM: So, the friend that you were with didn't drink?

Mary: No. She had a beer and then was like, "You're not okay" and then took me home and put me to bed.

EM: So, after the fact, did you report the incident? Or do you know anyone else that did?

Mary: No, I know there were a lot of other people there. I don't know anyone who reported it.

EM: And was this at a fraternity party?

Mary: It was at a fraternity party. All of the fraternity parties are off campus here. They've kicked all the fraternities off campus, which I think makes these things happen a lot easier because they're not in the immediate vicinity of, you know, [the school] is really not there, it's just a party off-campus and a lot of the parties are far away, so you have to take a cab and they're not in good areas either, so I mean my biggest concern is that someone is going to wander off and get seriously hurt. [Whitney] is not the safest place outside certain areas, so ...

EM: I'm really sorry that happened to you.

Mary: Don't drink the punch, yeah, for your own sake.

EM: What is your awareness of sexual assault happening [at Whitney]?

Mary: Well, just that experience for me ... like I don't see any reason to like drug ... I mean, generally guys don't drink the punch, so I don't see any reason that you would spike the punch unless you, you know, were planning on being able to take advantage. So as far as me, I haven't actually seen it [a rape] happening. I've never personally seen it but I've definitely heard about people who were blacked-out drunk, don't remember what happened, who were taken advantage of in those sorts of situations. A lot of times the rape line is very blurred and, you know, they don't report it because they don't want it to turn into a "he-said/she-said" kind of thing.

Another student at Whitney, Amy, told me that she intervened in a scenario at a fraternity party, where an older male was becoming aggressive with a younger female who was heavily intoxicated, and therefore unable to give consent. Amy reported that the male student, a member of the fraternity hosting the party, was trying to take the young woman to his room. She offered the young woman a safe ride home, to which the male responded, "She's fine. Back off, bitch!" Amy succeeded in getting the young woman to safety, and when she later relayed the incident to her boyfriend, she was disturbed by his response, defending the fraternity brother. When I asked how she thought male students at her school viewed their female counterparts, she replied:

Amy: It's sort of like guys see women at Whitney as beautiful, intelligent, smart and utterly disposable. It's sort of like guys have gotten so used to being able to treat girls pretty shitty. But it's like girls are taught to believe that that's the best they should be able to expect. So they don't say anything and they either hope it's going to get better, that it'll be different and because no one's stepping up and it's like "No, this is not good enough," guys don't ever feel like they

need to give more, which is such a generalization. That doesn't apply to everyone but I think that the [Whitney] culture and like.. the culture nowadays in general that you see in the media and everywhere is that women are supposed to make themselves sexually available and ... I don't know, men are entitled to women's bodies a little bit.

I think, again, in the Greek system ... I think there's definitely a sense of entitlement at Whitney and other elite institutions, where people think because I work this hard or because I'm in this fraternity or because, you know, I'm going to have this future job or because I have this much money or, you know, whatever, I deserve X, Y and Z, or girls should want to sleep with me.

So, for example, going out, I had two different friends who were at [college bar] and they were dancing with some guy and the guy tried to make out with them and they were like "Whoa" and both of them were like "But I'm in [XXX] fraternity" and they were like "What? I don't care." I think a sense of entitlement is definitely, definitely a part of [Whitney] culture and that's not to say that women don't have the same [sense of entitlement] but it's in different way.

The story this student shared of her experience at a party intervening in a situation where one of her peers was “at risk” of being sexually assaulted by another student is an example of what professionals in the field of sexual assault prevention call “bystander intervention.” The bystander intervention model is what rape-prevention programs at many universities (like the ones at Acorn University and Legacy University) are using in their peer education programs. At Acorn, all first-year students attend a mandatory orientation on a variety of topics, including a peer education component on the subject of sexual assault. Students perform a skit presenting a party situation, where a sexual assault is unfolding. In one scenario, a rape occurs. In another, a peer intervenes and stops the rape before it happens. At the end of the skit, the student-actors come out of their roles and facilitate a discussion with the audience, answering questions and sharing different “bystander intervention” strategies. Legacy uses a similar model at freshman orientation and at the time of my interview was working on developing relationships with sports teams and SSCs, which the program identified as “high risk” groups.

In a society that has normalized rape and violence against women in a broader sense, female victims of rape often don't report the crimes committed against them in part because they have internalized rape culture to the extent that they fear (and feel responsible for) the consequences the perpetrator may face. Many of the female students I interviewed told me they had friends who

had been raped (by a male acquaintance) who were afraid to report the rape because they “didn’t want to ruin his life” or “didn’t want to get him expelled.” They stated that if there was a mechanism in place to report the rape anonymously or if there was a punishment less severe than school expulsion, they thought more victims would come forward. These kinds of statements reflect the nature of acquaintance-rape as opposed to stranger-rape. While the 75-80% of rapes (Krebs et al., 2007) fall into the category of “acquaintance rape,” cases in which the victim knows the perpetrator as an acquaintance, friend, or (ex)boyfriend, the discourse around rape until relatively recently has largely focused on “stranger danger,” a false narrative deeply ingrained in our collective psyche that casts rapists as strangers jumping out from behind bushes. In contrast to the blue light system that is intended to protect women in the event of an attack by a stranger on campus, most rapes (like other forms of sexual violence) begin with a social encounter amongst peers. The perpetrator is someone that the victim shares a set of friends or acquaintances with and often times is a person the victim thought was her “friend.” This explains why women in sororities are particularly vulnerable to rape, as fraternities and sororities tend to overlap in their social networks and frequently “pair up” with one another for special events.

Why does rape culture persist on campus?

1) The role of the institution

If a rape occurs on a school campus, we need to consider: (1) who makes the rules that led to the rape happening in the first place; (2) who makes the rules about how the rape gets talked about; and (3) who makes the rules about how the rape gets responded to in a disciplinary/legal aspect. The case of a male student at St. Paul’s, an elite prep school in New Hampshire which made headlines in August 2015 is an example of how rape culture was at play in creating an environment where older male students were pressured to have sex with younger female students

in carrying on a school tradition known as “senior salute.”³¹ While the individual perpetrator is ultimately responsible for his actions, the social forces motivating him to commit an act of rape must also be examined. When male aggression and sexual conquest over women is ritualized and passed down as “tradition” from one generation to the next, it becomes deeply embedded in the culture. When such rituals become traditions within an institution such as an elite prep school or university, we must also ask, what role does the institution play in perpetuating or ending traditions that are harmful to its students? Further, how do students’ awareness of the institution’s position inform: (1) their own relationship to the institution, (2) their social interactions with peers, (3) how they perceive their own position in the social hierarchy of their school, (4) their ability and/or willingness to challenge rape culture within their school community, and (5) their ability and/or willingness to report sexual assault when it occurs?

Within campus culture, various subcultures coexist, some of them actively working to dismantle rape culture (e.g. student-driven anti-violence groups) and some of them (intentionally or unintentionally) actively reproducing rape culture. Students cited (all-male) sports teams, fraternities (and other kinds of SSCs), and university administrations as obstacles to deconstructing rape culture on college campuses. Additionally, several students at elite institutions noted that their university had to grapple with “traditions” that reflected attitudes of male supremacy that were embedded in the institution itself and in the SSCs of the institution. These “traditional” values are also held by many donors within the institution’s alumni network. Rebecca, a member of a co-ed SSC at Whitney, who reported that a male acquaintance in her SSC attempted to sexually

³¹ See *Boston Globe* “Jurors take up N.H. prep school rape case,” 8/28/15.

assault her (and did rape two other female members in the SSC), had this to say regarding the university's response to sexual assault at her school:

Rebecca: Well, you know we just had ... when was it, last year, the year before that? One student sued Whitney after they expelled him. I think that girl, the story was that she came to Whitney [administration], and Whitney did nothing. Then she went to the police. Then Whitney expelled him. And then he sued Whitney, saying it was consensual.

In this passage, Hope, a basketball player at Legacy, reflects on how she came to identify as a feminist through coursework in gender studies. She cites sexual assault as a feminist issue for her generation, noting that university administrations often stand in the way of progress.

Hope: I took a Psychology of Gender class here [at Legacy]. Before that I never really considered myself a feminist because obviously they have a really bad rep for being extremist and just a negative connotation associated regarding feminism. Once I learned about all the issues that women face, I realized that it's extremely important that I have a husband who thinks the same way, especially with all the recent issues about sexual assault on college campuses, how often administration tries to cover it up.

Another Whitney student, Alice, reflects on the role of both fraternities and the university administration at her school.

Alice: The sexual assault rates at Whitney are incredibly high, even among our peer institutions, and the university does a very poor job of protecting those who've experienced sexual assault. So you hear story after story of women who have been drugged and gang-raped at fraternity parties and they go and report it. And then the family [of the perpetrator(s)] comes in and pays some money and then nothing happens. And the guy continues to walk the campus and nobody cares.

EM: Is that something that has been gaining attention either in the school newspaper or formal communications coming from the administration?

Alice: It comes in waves, because an incident will happen, people will raise questions about it on campus. And then it will be squashed quickly by the university under the guise of protecting the accuser, the accused and his identity or whatever. It's swept under the rug, very hush, hush. But it's a huge problem.

Erin: So what sort of response do you think could address the problem from an institutional standpoint at the university level? What could be in place so that it doesn't get swept under the rug?

Alice: I would want the university to take claims of sexual violence more seriously. I mean instead of thinking about the university's image and not wanting another scandal in the news to think about the victim. I'm very aware that there are false accusations and I'm not advocating that anybody's life should be destroyed because they were falsely accused of rape, but at the same time ignoring all of the true accusations is not a way to compensate for that.

As the statements of these students reflect, rape culture is especially problematic in elite environments with traditions of hegemonic masculinity that are sustained through alumni networks and the influence of families with vast amounts of economic capital. Parents of perpetrators and

the perpetrators themselves have been known to threaten, bribe, or sue universities when they take action in response to crimes of sexual misconduct.

2) The role of sport culture in college life

Within university sport culture, students reported that male athletes were valued more than female athletes. This was a theme that was repeated among all the female athletes I interviewed at Legacy, at Whitney, and at Acorn. Because I had the opportunity to visit a class at Legacy that focused on sport, I was able to speak directly with a number of female athletes, whose statements are reflected in this section. At Whitney and at Acorn, the female athletes I met played either club or intramural sports or they engaged in sports such as horseback-riding and dance, which they reported were not considered “real sports” by the student body, largely because they were sports that were associated with women. While none of the students I interviewed at Jackson were university athletes, a few did report that they felt the university advertised its men’s teams more than its women’s teams (e.g. basketball). Amanda, a volleyball player at Legacy, had this to say about sport culture at her school:

Amanda: I actually think you could argue that people know who the male athletes are more so than they know who the female athletes are, for whatever reason. Like the big sports, people are more likely to go to a men’s basketball game than they are to a women’s game. We get a pretty good turnout to the volleyball games, but there’s bigger names on campus, I guess you could say.

Hope, a basketball player at Legacy, reported that there was more support from the university and more fan support for the men’s basketball team at her school than the women’s basketball team.

Hope: There is much more rallying behind men's basketball games and just men's sports in general on campus. I often see people trying to get groups together to go to men's sports events and not so much the women's. So, I would say it is more of a social event going to watch men's sports as opposed to women's sports.

Stacey, a top-ranked tennis player at Legacy, felt that there was good support for both men's and women's tennis at her school, but that in most of the other sports there was less interest in watching the women's teams among the student body.

Stacey: Women's tennis is decently equitable. My best friend is on the women's ice hockey team. They are a larger team and I'm around them more than other teams. Men's hockey, you can't find a seat. Women's hockey, you have the choice of the entire stadium. Part of it is because a professional women's hockey league exists but not anything like the NHL.

As the statements of these students highlight, the sports most celebrated in university culture tend to be mostly the same sports celebrated in the wider culture of professional sports, namely men's football, men's basketball, and men's ice hockey. One difference I found between university sport culture and professional sport culture is that men's lacrosse is a popular sport at elite colleges, while men's baseball is one of the "big four" sports celebrated in the wider sport culture. At the elite schools in this study, there was a perception that male athletes were "untouchable" as Mary put it, the first-year student who reported she and others were drugged at a fraternity party, which, to her knowledge, nobody had reported. Students felt that their school would automatically back its male athletes, regardless of their behavior. Based on previous incidents of sexual assault allegations against college athletes at their schools, many students felt intimidated or unmotivated to report recent occurrences of sexual assault (or drugging) when the perpetrators were athletes. Because sport culture is so deeply embedded in the university culture at large, disentangling rape culture from sport culture is one of the challenges universities now face in answering the White House's call to action.³²

³² See 2014 report by White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault.

One of my informants, Cate, a varsity athlete on the women's soccer team at Legacy, shared her experience of differential treatment by the university. At the time of the interview, the men's ice hockey team had recently tied for first place in the Ivy Division. In celebration of the team's success, alumni and administrators rallied around the male ice hockey players. Their achievement was acknowledged by a university-wide bonfire, ample coverage in the school's media outlets, as well as awarding the players expensive rings. In contrast, a few months earlier, the women's soccer team won the National title, beating out not only all of the Ivy schools, but every school in Division One competition. Their victory was not formally recognized by the university, the media coverage was minimal, and my informant's interpretation of this was that the school did not care much about their victory. The following is an excerpt from my interview with Cate.

Cate: We [female athletes] get discredited and.. like the men's ice hockey team.. I mean, I'm probably going to sound bitter when I say this but the men's ice hockey team won the Ivy League this year and they didn't actually win it outright. They got a huge bonfire with the whole school and Alumni attended and everything.

EM: Who sponsored the bonfire?

Cate: The school, as far as I know. And the bonfire was actually only really for when they beat [Ivy rival] in the same season. So they get that ... they would get that no matter what, whether or not they won the Ivy League. But they got this huge bonfire.

EM: And when you say they didn't win it out right, what does that mean?

Cate: They didn't beat every team in the Ivy League. They actually lost their last game to [Ivy competitor], so I think technically they tied it [the #1 position] with [Ivy rival] and one of the other teams. But because they beat them [Ivy rival], I think they're the ultimate winner. But they didn't beat every team in the league. But anyway... they got these huge rings, like big Ivy League champion rings. The ceremony was over the weekend. Meanwhile, my team won the National Championship. And no one really knew about it at Legacy. This was a National Championship, which is all the NCAA Division One teams. We were number one.

EM: So, did the ice hockey team win the National title?

Cate: The hockey team won the Ivy League, just the Ivy Leagues.

EM: I see. What you're saying is that your team went beyond the Ivy League title to the National title and it was actually a higher achievement in sport?

Cate: Yes. The National Championship is the highest achievement that you can win as a Division One college athlete. But it's just funny because it wasn't on TV either. Our game, it was just streamed online. I remember the school sent

out an email like the day of, very close to the time we played, so not a lot of people knew about it. So, it's just funny to compare those two things.

I mean, our team has always been successful in the Ivy League. But we would never get Ivy League rings because it's just one of those things. And the men's ice hockey team won and that's great but it's ... I guess it's a bit annoying that they get a huge bonfire if they beat two specific teams. And we beat, I don't know, 20 teams probably. And it was a big deal, don't get me wrong. But it wasn't half as big as the bonfire event was.

EM: If you had the ability to make a change, is there anything you would change?

Cate: I think I would probably just put more effort into making students and people aware of things like that. Make people more aware of women's sports or just even other sports. I mean, our fencing team is really good and they don't get a lot of publicity. I think that I'd try to make the sports who aren't just naturally popular, you know, more visible. Or just awareness even, like a recap. Or like, "Congratulations!"

Given the context of the men's ice hockey team's achievement being celebrated in the same academic year that the women's soccer team's (higher) achievement is essentially ignored by the university, what impact does this have on students? Returning to the question of how students' awareness of the institution's position informs: (1) *their own relationship to the institution*, in this case, the tone set by the university in its preferential treatment of male athletes contributes to the fear that female students feel about speaking in class on the subject of rape in sports. Further, if a male athlete were to rape a female athlete, how does this context impact the female athlete's faith in her school to respond fairly? Before the university even has an opportunity to respond to such a case, it has already sent a message to its students that male athletes are more valuable to the school than female athletes. When students receive this kind of message in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, it informs their thinking and their decision-making on many levels, as argued by the theory of "symbolic interactionism."³³ In a case of rape, it becomes particularly critical that all students feel valued equally by their institution. As my informant who had been drugged at a Whitney fraternity party pointed out, there was a sense among the student body that (male) athletes are "untouchable" and that the university would defend rather than punish them for acts of rape.

³³ Herbert Blumer is credited for coining the term and introducing the theory "symbolic interactionism," for which Erving Goffman is also well known (Blumer, 1969).

This contributed to the fear and hesitation many victims of sexual assault felt about reporting the crimes that had been committed against them. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, these students were responding to their social understanding of reality, an understanding that is derived from their social interactions with others in their school community, with the institution itself, as well as their interactions with society through social media and public discourse on rape. As Meltzer (1975) explained, “Behavior is not defined by forces from the environment or inner forces such as drives, or instincts, but rather by a reflective, socially understood meaning of both the internal and external incentives that are currently presented.” Notably, students at three of the four schools in this study (Legacy, Whitney, and Acorn) reported that they felt the university valued its male athletes more than its other students. At Jackson, there was no football team and sports did not play as large a role in campus culture as at the other schools. Some students at Jackson reported they felt their school did not care much about its students at all.

College sport culture in many ways reflects the values and social norms established in the wider sport culture. Within sport culture in the U.S., there exists a hierarchy, American football being at the top of that hierarchy, golf being at the lower end. A 2014 study of Americans’ favorite sports³⁴ reported that professional football ranked number one, with 32%³⁵ of respondents citing it as their favorite sport. Professional baseball ranked second, with 16%³⁶ citing it as their favorite, followed by college football in spot number 3, with 10%³⁷ of those polled citing it as their favorite. Notably, the only women’s sports that made the list³⁸ were women’s tennis and women’s soccer.

³⁴ See “Harris Poll: NFL Remains King Among U.S. Adults, But Gap With Baseball Closer,” 01/28/15. (<http://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Daily/Issues/2015/01/28/Research-and-Ratings/Harris-Poll.aspx>)

³⁵ This figure is up from 24% in 1985.

³⁶ This figure is down from 23% in 1985.

³⁷ This figure is the same as it was in 1985.

³⁸ No women’s sports made the list in 1985.

Women's tennis came in at number 12, with only 2% of respondents citing it as their favorite. Worse, women's soccer came in last at number 14 (after bowling), with only 1% of respondents naming it as their favorite. In contrast, professional men's basketball ranked number 5, professional men's ice hockey ranked number 6, men's college basketball ranked number 8, and professional men's golf ranked number 10.

Does it matter that it was the ice hockey team that was the recipient of so much attention at Legacy in the aforementioned case? Yes and no. Yes, because of the special place that ice hockey holds in college culture and in the wider culture. No, because it could have been the football team or the lacrosse team or the basketball team. Different sports are more prominent at different schools, varying by factors such as region of the country, funding available, and the school's history of success in each sport. In the U.S., field hockey is a sport that women are funneled into. Yet, as my informant pointed out, in other countries (e.g. England) field hockey is a sport played by men. This is significant because in the U.S. we think of field hockey as a woman's sport and, in the hierarchy of sports, men's sports generally rank higher than women's sports. When we click on the nightly news, a section of each program is dedicated to "sports," generally consisting of the big four: football, basketball, baseball, and ice hockey. All of these are men's sports. Since sports are generally sex-segregated from the time children reach puberty up through amateur and professional sports, there are very few opportunities for female athletes to "break the glass ceiling" since they are not competing on the same playing field (literally) as their male counterparts. When we pause to consider what the female parallels are to the big four, we come up short: (1) Football: women don't play professional football and the closest parallel would probably be women's rugby, which is not covered; (2) Basketball: women's basketball (WNBA) is not covered by the mainstream news outlets, but it does get some coverage on ESPN (though

far less than men's); (3) Baseball: women don't play baseball, they play softball. (Why is it that girls can play Little League baseball but when they reach junior high school they are made to play "softball" instead of "hardball?") Again, women's softball is not covered in the nightly news; (4) Ice Hockey: women do play ice hockey but, like basketball, they have separate leagues, which are also not covered in the nightly news. Consequently, female athletes are largely invisible in sports culture. Their bodies are literally missing. This lack of visibility of female athletes in sports coverage has a powerful impact on how we think about sports heroes, gender, and which athletes are *real* athletes, as I argued in Chapter 2.

In this chapter, I argue that sport culture (in the form that we see in the U.S. at both the collegiate and professional levels) informs rape culture in several ways. Firstly, at the collegiate level, many colleges and universities have elevated (men's) sports to a position of such importance to the identity of the institution that it invites corruption. When an athlete or coach is found or alleged to be involved in misconduct (especially sexual misconduct), institutions have frequently responded by attempting to halt investigations or to place their economic interest in a winning team over the interest of finding out the truth and correcting sexual misconduct. In fact, a 2014 study conducted by the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Financial Contracting Oversight found that 41% of colleges and universities surveyed had not conducted a single investigation of sexual violence on their campus in the last five years.³⁹ When students learn of patterns at their own and other schools where the institution elects to protect perpetrators rather than victims of sexual assault, they are less likely to report incidences of sexual assault. One study found that reporting rates for campus sexual assault are extremely low, with only 12% of student victims reporting the

³⁹ See "Sexual Violence on Campus: How too many institutions of higher education are failing to protect students," a report prepared by the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Financial Contracting Oversight, 07/09/14. (<http://www.mccaskill.senate.gov/SurveyReportwithAppendix.pdf>)

assault to law enforcement (Kilpatrick et al., 2007). In this way, rape culture is reproduced by students' self-regulatory behavior in a Foucauldian sense. The regimes of practice (i.e. universities, athletics departments, alumni networks of sports fans) have already established the rules, by which students in turn self-censor, not challenging the regimes of practice on which they are dependent (for their present and future career success).

As a consequence of the institutional bias favoring male athletes that many universities have displayed in cases of sexual assault, as well as the overall importance given to men's sports within college culture, male athletes internalize a sense of entitlement. This is the second way that sport culture informs rape culture. In sport culture, men are socialized to expect that success on the field will (or should) translate to success in sexual practice. That "success" in sexual practice is based on a model of hegemonic masculinity that sets up both men and women for negative outcomes. For men, it is rooted in fantasy, one that tells men women will throw themselves at the feet of sports heroes, wanting nothing more than to please and provide sexual favors. In this fantasy model, women are the trophies for men's athletic achievements. Tom Brady, the star quarterback for the New England Patriots, and his supermodel wife, Giselle Bündchen (who rose to fame by posing in her underwear for Victoria's Secret), represent this model. In sport culture, Tom Brady is the hero, not only for his success on the field, but also for his "success" in securing a wife who symbolizes the hetero-male sexual fantasy. For college-age men, the Brady-Bündchen pairing reinforces the idea that athletes are entitled to have their sexual fantasies fulfilled. These ideas intersect with: (1) the importance of (male) sports in college culture and (2) the "hookup" culture that dominates in college social life to foster an environment where men expect women to engage in casual sex. As such, male athletes especially are prone to approach their sexual encounters with a sense of entitlement.

The third way that sport culture informs rape culture is that it perpetuates a gender binary of male body as subject/female body as object. In U.S. sport culture, the male athlete is celebrated as hero, while the female athlete is often marginalized or rendered invisible (as in the presentation of the big four in the nightly news). When female athletes *are* visible, on the other hand, their conformity to heteronormative notions of “femininity” and “sexual attractiveness” are overemphasized, as I discussed in Chapter 2. This results in a gendered binary within sport culture where the male body ideal is based on a combination of speed and strength (e.g. the football quarterback) and the female body ideal is based on being thin and toned (muscular but not *too* muscular). The body ideal of the quarterback applies only to men,⁴⁰ while the body ideal of the cheerleader remains stubbornly persistent as the standard for women. In rape culture, women’s bodies are overly sexualized (and sexualized in a particular, objectifying way). We see overlap here between sport culture and rape culture. In both cultures, men are the subject, women are the object.

3) The role of hookup culture in college life

Another recurring theme in my interviews with students was the predominance of “hookup culture” on college campuses today. As Alexi, a first-year student at Whitney put it:

Alexi: So, you know, [Whitney] has this whole like “hookup culture,” which actually they did this whole study and like 73% of [Whitney] students would actually be in a committed relationship but it's sort of like there's this notion of what [Whitney] culture is and everyone's expected to conform to that, even if it's not what they actually want or at least make it seem like that's what they're trying to conform to.

This social standard favoring sex without commitment over sex attached to romantic relationships within college culture has been well documented (Bogle, 2008; Garcia and Reiber, 2008; Fielder and Carey, 2010; Gray and Garcia, 2012; Lewis et al., 2013). While “hookup culture” was more

⁴⁰ Despite the progress women have made in sports, we are not seeing a cultural shift where football organizations are looking to teach more girls to play the game.

normative at the elite schools in my study, it was present at all the schools I visited. Students described “hookups” as anything from kissing on a dance floor to having intercourse, and they felt that the use of the term “hookup” was intentionally vague. In this way, students were able to negotiate their privacy, disclosing as much or as little information about their own “hookup” as they wanted to share with the listener. Thus, “hooking up” involves gray areas – blurry, undefined spaces. Employing the term “hooking up” to describe a sexual encounter allows the speaker to “get credit” for participating in the sexual culture of college, while leaving it to the listener to interpret, imagine, and make assumptions about what took place between the parties involved. This vagueness served men when a “hookup” did not include intercourse, while for women it was the opposite. Both male and female students confirmed that a sexual double standard existed within the hookup culture, which judged and shamed women, while praising and rewarding men who engaged in casual sex.

On the subject of sexual assault, many students also spoke about “gray” areas as opposed to “black and white” rules of conduct. I noticed that when they talked about these “gray” areas what usually followed was a reference to the use or abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Rebecca, who was a member of a co-ed SSC at Whitney, reported that two of her friends had been raped by the same male member of their SSC, and that this person had also attempted to sexually assault her.⁴¹ In her own case, she was able to escape, citing her sobriety as a primary factor in extricating herself from the perpetrator’s grasp. In the cases of her two friends, she reported that one had been drugged without her consent and, as a result, felt less certain she would be believed. This victim assumed in the context of her school’s rape culture that her credibility would be jeopardized by

⁴¹ My informant stated that what made her believe the two other victims (her friends) was that the perpetrator had also tried to assault her.

the fact that she had been drugged. Rather than viewing her experience of being drugged as potential evidence against the perpetrator, her perception in the context of rape culture was that this fact would be used as evidence *against* her, to negate her experience of being raped. In the case of my informant's second friend, Rebecca stated, "It was a more black-and-white rape." It is noteworthy that my informant made a distinction between her friend who had been doubly violated by first being drugged without her consent, then raped, and her friend who had been raped without the use of drugs to facilitate the crime. The implication here is that a person must be completely sober for their rape to be viewed by others as "black and white."

College is a time of experimentation for most young people: with new ideas, new friends, new foods, as well as experimentation with alcohol/drugs and sex. It is a time to try on new identities, to explore career options. As incoming students experiment with alcohol and drugs especially, they often overindulge in their first few years before they learn their limits. Female students are particularly vulnerable at this time of experimentation, as older males may target freshmen and sophomore women, pressuring them to drink beyond their limits and then pressuring them to engage in sex beyond their limits. Indeed, the "gray" areas that exist within hookup culture (Was it kissing? Was it sex?) as well as the "gray areas" created by the presence of chemical substances (How much did he drink? How much did she drink? Was she drugged? How much can either one of them remember?) create an atmosphere where the variable of consent gets blurred. Often the variable of consent gets lost altogether when the onus is placed on the victim of rape to "prove" that s/he did not give their consent. "Proving" consent comes down to pitting his word against hers. The standard of "innocent until proven guilty" coupled with the notion of proving that guilt "beyond the shadow of a doubt" has made it difficult to convict rapists, especially those who were acquainted with their victims prior to the assault.

Conclusion

When an institution sends a message to its students that male athletes are more valuable than female athletes or more valuable than the rest of the student body, this reinforces rape culture in two ways: (1) it perpetuates a sense of entitlement among males with athlete status (including a sense of entitlement to women's bodies) and (2) it fosters an unequal environment where female students feel less valued, less secure, and less likely to report sexual assault. In other words, gender inequality becomes institutionalized when the institution itself sets a tone of gender bias. Employing a symbolic interactionist perspective here, I argue that students' own responses (in their thoughts, their words, and their actions) to rape and rape culture on their campus are largely mediated through the messages they receive from the university. The university is itself an actor influencing the social interactions that take place among and between students. From a Foucauldian perspective, when we look at rape as a form of terrorism, we see that allowing rape to continue at the rate it is occurring on college campuses⁴² undermines the citizens' (in this case the students') faith in the capacity of the governing body (in this case the university) to guarantee their security.

The August 2015 verdict in the Saint Paul's case, where the jury (consisting of 9 men and 3 women) ruled that there was not sufficient evidence to *prove* that the 15-year old girl did not give her consent (her own testimony is not sufficient) to having sex with the 18-year old whom she says raped her, shows how difficult it is for victims of rape to seek justice in a legal system that operates on the standard of "innocent until proven guilty," coupled with the notion of proving that guilt "beyond the shadow of a doubt." This has been a challenge in rape cases historically,

⁴² According to data from the U.S. Department of Education, college campuses reported over 5,000 forcible sex offenses in 2013, but a recent study shows that the actual number of offenses is estimated to be at least six times that number. (www.gillibrand.senate.gov/campus-sexual-assault)

and though we are seeing the tides shift somewhat (e.g. the media discourse around the St. Paul's case did include references to the role of "senior salute," thus acknowledging that rape is connected to institutionalized traditions), we are not yet seeing dramatically different results when victims do come forward. Even when laws change (e.g. *Roe v. Wade*, 1973), the enforcement of those laws is still weighed down by the regimes of practice that made the old ones and the culture wars that rage on long after new laws are passed. Although abortion has been legal in the U.S. for 42 years, the culture wars related to reproductive choice are far from over, as evidenced by the recent near-shutdown of the federal government over funding for Planned Parenthood.⁴³ The pro-life culture is strong, and it coexists with the pro-choice culture in this country, just as rape-culture subgroups coexist with anti-rape subgroups.

When we consider historical context, it is significant that women were considered the legal property of their husbands under coverture laws until the 1840s, that marital rape was legal until the 1970s (in some states until 1993), and that there were no words for "domestic violence" or "sexual harassment"⁴⁴ until second wave feminism. These old laws set the stage, where rape was considered a crime against another man, not against the woman herself. Although laws have changed and feminist-minded subgroups have succeeded in changing the culture around sexual assault in some ways, old attitudes and rape-culture subgroups continue to impact both how we talk about rape (or don't talk about it) as well as how reports of rape (and other forms of sexual abuse) are responded to by universities, police departments, and courts of law. Though it may

⁴³ See "How An Anonymous Spy With a Video Camera Infiltrated Planned Parenthood and Reignited The Abortion Debate" *Time* 10/5/15.

⁴⁴ The high-profile cases of Clarence Thomas (1991) and OJ Simpson (1995) are examples of how the legal system has historically not worked in favor of victims of sexual harassment and domestic violence.

sound “second-wave” to say so, the persistence of sexual assault must be understood in the context of a binary gender system, and the history of gender relations within that binary system. The transgender rights movement that has gained visibility in the last few years⁴⁵ is beginning to “trouble” (in the Butler sense) that binary gender system, but those changes are slow and painful. It is important to remember that the suffrage era that emerged from the abolition movement lasted 72 years from the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. We are now 53 years away from the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which ignited the “second wave” of feminism in the U.S. As Kathleen Gerson and others have pointed out, that gender revolution is unfinished.⁴⁶ One of the goals of 1970’s feminism was to end rape. We are still working on that goal. In order to end rape, or at least to reduce it, we will need to continue the important work of dismantling the “rape culture” that fosters an environment where rape occurs without consequence to the perpetrator. In a society that has experienced large-scale changes in its laws and social norms around gender, relatively rapidly over the last four decades, there are a few areas where hyper-masculine subcultures remain stubborn. I argue that fraternities and male-only sports teams (along with the military, which did not come up in my research with students) are the last bastions of hyper-masculinity, and that these subcultures operate hand-in-hand with rape culture.

⁴⁵ See “Battle of the Bathroom” *Time* 05/30/16 and “A Nation in Transition” *Time* 06/09/14.

⁴⁶ See Gerson, 2010.

Chapter 4: “Body Projects: Women’s Bodies under Surveillance”

Introduction

As discussed in the first chapter, one of the themes that came out of my interviews with female students at elite universities is the concept of “effortless perfectionism.” This social norm is a gendered phenomenon, whereby women are held to a different standard than men due to their historically subordinate social position. In order to maintain their standing at elite institutions, college women feel they must be “perfect,” or at least project an image of perfection to those around them, to prove their worthiness as a member of the elite community. The female students I spoke with reported that as women they felt they had to work harder than male students to be heard and taken seriously academically and professionally. But above and beyond their academic ranking and future career paths, what women talked about more than anything else as a barrier to gender equality, was the pressure they felt to conform to our culture’s beauty standards. For women, the ideal body type is based on an unattainable fantasy in which fat-phobia is taken to an extreme and “too much” muscle or muscle in the “wrong places” is viewed as masculine. This is the ideal body type that college women at Whitney and Legacy described. In Chapter 1, I link “effortless perfectionism” to the myth of the “supermom.” In this chapter, I discuss “effortless perfectionism” as it relates to body projects.

By body projects I refer to the “self-disciplinary” practices in the Foucauldian sense that individuals employ to achieve the appearance of an ideal body. While both men and women engage in body practices, it is the body practices of females that I discuss in this chapter, as this was a theme that most of my female informants brought up, but which was not a point of emphasis

in my interviews with males. Among my female respondents, the body practices that were employed by students included: (1) Disordered Eating, (2) Obsessive Exercising, (3) Dressing to Conform, and (4) Compulsory Hair and Makeup Maintenance. Additionally, the body practices of undergoing cosmetic procedures including cosmetic surgery among celebrities (e.g. Kim Kardashian, Nicky Minaj) were cited by students as macro pressures to engage in body practices, coupled with feelings of anxiety and inadequacy.

In this chapter, I draw on Foucault's concepts of "self-discipline" and "self-surveillance" to analyze how college students navigate hookup culture, gendered beauty ideals, and sexual harassment within a context of hegemonic masculinity, consumerism, and healthism. I also draw on Butler's work on gendered self-presentation and Bourdieu's concepts of "social capital" and "cultural capital" to shed light on how and why individuals conform to pre-established gendered scripts relative to bodily presentation. As Dworkin and Wachs (2009) discuss in their book, *Body Panic: Gender, Health, and the Selling of Fitness*, consumer culture works in conjunction with hegemonic masculinity to promote the concept of "healthism" (Crawford, 1980) whereby men and women must transform themselves into the "right kind of objects." As I discussed in Chapter 2, having the "right" kind of body is drastically different for women than it is for men. I found that for women at the elite schools in this study, the "right" kind of body meant being tall, skinny, light-skinned, and having long hair. This is the "Barbie" body type that I described in Chapter 2. In contrast, I found that for women at Jackson University, the "hourglass" figure was the dominant ideal body type. This is the same body type as the "Bunny" that I have likewise referred to in Chapter 2. For women at Acorn University, both the "Barbie" and "Bunny" ideal types existed without either one seeming to dominate.

In addition to ideal body type variations, I also found differences between schools relative to the role of hookup culture in social life. The influence of hookup culture was the strongest at Legacy, where students described a social environment dominated by SSCs. Hookup culture was also strong at Whitney, where SSCs were a major part of student life, but certainly not the only option available to students. I found that hookup culture was less dominant at the public schools in this study, where fewer students were members of SSCs. At Acorn University, students talked about the presence of hookup culture, but it was also quite common for students to date monogamously. At Jackson University, students described hookup culture existing mostly within SSCs, but felt that in general students were equally likely to date monogamously. However, the most common theme I heard from female students at Jackson was that the overrepresentation of women at their school made heterosexual dating challenging. Sexual harassment was another theme that came up where I found differences between schools. While this topic was described by students at all four schools in this study, it was the most emphasized as an everyday social problem at Acorn University. The next section provides an overview of the major themes that emerged from the interviews with female students at each of the four schools relative to body projects.

Gender Performance & Selective Social Clubs (SSCs) at Legacy University

At Legacy University, ten of the eleven female students I interviewed cited body image as a problem for women of their generation. Of these, seven students talked about gendered self-presentation in relation to “hookup culture” within selective social clubs (SSCs) as a significant part of social life at their school. The most commonly cited theme connected to gender and the body was the night life that took place on “SSC row,” a term that students used to refer to the row

of mansions that housed the school's eleven SSCs. All twelve⁴⁷ of the students I interviewed at Legacy University told me that the SSCs heavily dominate social life for the entire campus, with approximately 70% of upperclassmen participating in them. Within the SSC system, there is a hierarchy of five prestigious clubs with extremely selective admission processes and six less-prestigious clubs with more lax gatekeeping practices. Established in the mid-18th century, membership in one of this highly selective University's SSCs was a marker of being an elite among the elites. As one male student put it, "There is a sort of fetishization of having been chosen among a select few. That comes from the fact that 93% of the people who apply here don't get in. That translates into so many other aspects of our lives here, seeing a selective process as a form of validation." Historically all-male groups, these SSCs are still predominantly run by male students, which means they have more say in terms of both who gets in and how the SSCs operate. One way this impacts social life on campus is that the leaders of the SSCs set the tone and select themes for their parties. One such theme that I heard at both the elite schools I visited (and somewhat but less so at the state schools) is the casting of male students as "bros" and female students as "hos" at SSC parties. Michael Kimmel, in his 2008 book, *Guyland*, found that the motto "bros before hos" was a mantra that was so central to the social identity of his informants (males between the ages of 16-26) who embraced hegemonic masculinity that he dedicated an entire chapter to this concept.

Women cast as "bros" or "hos": Social Capital and SSCs

One way that the mantra of "bros before hos" that Kimmel (2008) documented in his study of young men plays itself out in SSCs at Legacy University is described here by Stacey, a tennis

⁴⁷ At Legacy, my sample consisted of 1 male and 11 female students.

player, who states that a male friend in her SSC revealed to her the two ways female students can gain admittance by male gatekeepers.

Stacey: It was explained to me by a male teammate who I know for a fact, based on what other people said, spoke for me at discussions and said really nice things. You can get in because guys think you're pretty, they see you that way, or you can be one of the "bros." Those were the two ways. You had to embrace football [to be a "bro"]. It's not that guys have—it's an almost 50-50 balance at all clubs with gender percentages, but a lot of the time the girls would base [their decision] on do they actually like them? There is one club where I've been told the girls will hose you if they think you're too pretty. If they think you're a threat. That's not what I would ever want to join but that didn't surprise me actually.

Here I employ Bourdieu's concepts of "social capital" and "cultural capital" to analyze the social dynamics at play in SSCs at Legacy. As I argued in Chapter 2, in a society that measures women's value women primarily according to our physical appearance, a woman's perceived beauty (in accordance with conventional social norms) becomes a form of social capital, which translates into cultural and economic capital. I call this "beauty capital." We see from Stacey's experiences that the male members of SSCs generally make their decision to admit new female members based on the following: (1) a woman's beauty capital and (2) a woman's cultural capital (measured by her aptitude for and/or knowledge of male-dominated sports). In other words, men ask themselves, "Would I like to hook up with her?" and "Can I watch football with her?" In contrast, women are more likely to ask themselves, "Do I like her?" and "Does she have more beauty capital than I do?"

While both male and female students serve as gatekeepers of SSCs at Legacy University, they do so within a context that frames social interaction around heteronormative masculinity. In this setting, women compete with other women for approval from men. Men base their approval of women on (1) physical attractiveness (i.e. beauty capital) and (2) women's ability/willingness to conform to men's interests (i.e. cultural capital). Indeed, one must possess social capital to gain admittance to Legacy University's SSCs, and economic capital to maintain membership once

admitted. The forms of social capital are gendered. For males, social capital is gained by being a varsity athlete. For women, being a varsity athlete is also a form of social capital, but beauty capital (being pretty, but not “too pretty”) and cultural capital (in the form of conforming to men’s interests) are also significant factors in gaining access to Legacy University’s SSCs. Both men and women perform their gender (Butler, 1990) within the night life of the SSCs. Typically, men are encouraged to perform the role of pursuer, while women are expected to perform the role of sexually available object of pursuit. These gender performances are frequently enhanced by costuming the participants, as in this example of a “bros and hos” themed party, described by Gwen, a field hockey player.

Gwen: I guess girls tend to dress scandalously there [on SSC row] or it seems to lean that way, like what was it? It was a “master's” theme the other Sunday for the golf thing and it was like, “golf bros and tennis hos” for some reason. It’s always kind of discriminating or like, what’s the word, degrading to women. Even just the title of the theme, which is, I guess funny. I don’t know...

EM: Is this something that you attended, the golf party?

Gwen: Yeah, but I mean, I didn't dress for it. Some people do and I don't mean they always look like a “ho,” but ... it's not like you have to dress that way. But it's just funny to me that whoever's making up the titles, which I think is the president, which I think is a guy, makes it that way.

As Gwen points out, it is generally the male officers of SSCs who make decisions about what the themes will be when students congregate for a party. Since SSCs have historically promoted hyper-masculine values, it is not surprising that SSC themes parties continue to reflect those values. The underlying social norm is that men in fraternities and other kinds of SSCs are “brothers” whose allegiance to one another is priority number one. In this context, women are seen as a “polluting” presence in men’s space. While individual males may or may not hold hostile attitudes toward women, the social norms of the most prestigious SSCs are infused with misogynistic attitudes, which men perform when they congregate in groups. As Kimmel (2008) found, part of men’s gender performance involves consuming large quantities of alcohol and

encouraging others to do the same. Conformity to these social norms (e.g. sexually degrading women, heavy alcohol consumption) enhances men's social standing in the "brotherhood." Notably, the function of casting women as "whores" or "hos" serves to distance men from women rather than enhance a "brother-sister" type of relationship as Kimmel found in his study of men and women in the military (Kimmel, 2000).

Hookup Culture, Night Life, and Sexual Harassment

Over and over at Legacy University, I heard about the "hookup culture" of "SSC row" and how male-dominated SSCs influenced the atmosphere in ways that tended to objectify and sexually degrade women. The biggest concerns that college women at all the schools spoke of with regard to "hookup culture" were: (1) the sexual double standard, (2) sexual harassment, and (3) sexual assault. At Legacy, students described the social environment within SSCs as a heteronormative one in which men are "predatory" and "aggressive" towards women. Far from feeling liberated or empowered by "hookup culture," as some sex-positive feminists have argued hookup culture offers women, the young women I met felt that the "hookup culture" on their campus was infused with hostile attitudes toward women that amounted to rape culture. In the following passages, Ellen, Jeanne, and Hope describe how, within the male-dominated hookup culture at their school, women are often sexually harassed in the form of uninvited touch and sexually degrading verbal remarks.

Ellen: Someone did write an article about the hookup culture of "SSC row" and it was very nuanced about sexual harassment and even a little bit about sexual assault. I forget what it was called but I think a lot of people identified with that and it did talk about predatory behavior on "SSC row." I don't frequent "SSC row" often enough to be able to draw any conclusions about that. But the times I have been, especially as a freshman, less so now, I did notice men usually under the influence of alcohol would dance with me without my permission. And I saw that happen to one of my friends as well. There's definitely a lot of groping and dancing and grinding without people's permission. That happens a lot. Sometimes just kind of degrading comments as well.

Jeanne: I think there's such a disconnect between different groups of people on campus, and the way that they talk about and perceive women's issues. I think a lot of times people don't think that there are problems when in fact there are still very real problems. And a lot of that shows itself on "SSC row" and when people go out at night and sort of things that happen in hookup culture, but that are assault. I know people who have had very negative experiences,

and I don't want to stereotype, but especially with guys on [sports] teams. I think that there's still a culture of a certain type of masculinity, where objectifying women is still completely acceptable. I think also there are a lot more people who are just in a sort of zone where it's [sexual assault] not something they think about a lot. But once you introduce alcohol, things become a lot more sort of -- people act in ways that they maybe wouldn't condone when they're completely sober. And things kind of tend to surface in terms of lenient sort of attitudes about women or expectations of women.

Hope: I would say there's a very set kind of sexual script at the SSCs. Men are very much the initiators of it and it's interesting because it's very anonymous. Often times, a random guy that you don't know comes up and starts dancing with you without even asking. And then you honestly don't know what the guy looks like, but you have to depend on your friends who you're with to give you a heads up. So, that's very much following the traditional sexual script. Also, there will be times when certain SSCs will bang on their walls and have a kind of war cry and the men usually initiate that. That's very much like a male dominating thing and it's very aggressive as well.

As Jeanne points out, much of what gets passed off as “hookup culture” at Legacy is in fact sexual assault. Here I draw on Foucault's concepts of “discipline” and “surveillance” to understand the social interactions that take place between and among college students. With regard to sexual harassment at Legacy, students reported that incidences occur both in broad daylight and at night, but especially in contexts when students have been drinking. For Legacy students, social life at night revolves around SSC parties that begin on “SSC row” and move into the various mansions that house the individual clubs. Because SSC culture operates within a heteronormative framework of hegemonic masculinity, men perform the role of sexually aggressive pursuers “on the prowl.” In this context, women become the vulnerable objects of pursuit, whether or not they wish to perform this role. Their bodies are observed, monitored, and judged by women and men alike. They may be labeled “sexy,” “slutty,” “pretty,” “ugly,” “fat,” “hot,” “easy,” or “naïve,” among other terms depending on who is doing the judging. Women's bodies are literally under surveillance on “SSC row” and at SSC parties. In this setting, women survey other women's bodies to compare social standing and beauty capital. In contrast, men survey women's bodies in an effort to find a “hookup” partner for the night. They also survey women's bodies in the practice of sexual harassment. Both “hooking up” with and sexually harassing women are practices which men employ to gain social status among their male peers. As my male informant at Legacy pointed out, men police each other to ensure conformity to hegemonic masculinity. In this way, men

“discipline” one another and learn to “self-discipline” in order to maintain their social standing in SSCs, in which hyper-masculine social norms and values are deeply ingrained. These young men understand that the consequences for non-conformity to hyper-masculine norms may include ridicule, loss of social status, and social marginalization. In a culture that normalizes sexual harassment and encourages men to engage in uncommitted sex with as many women as possible, sexual assault is often ignored outright or mislabeled as “just a hookup” or “drunk sex.”

As these students describe it, the male-dominated “hookup culture” operates within a heteronormative framework, where both men and women act out gendered sexual scripts. For men, this means the goal of the evening is to find a woman to “hook up” with. Kimmel (2008) found that young men are motivated to “hook up” not so much by the actual pleasure of the sexual interaction itself, but by the social capital that is gained by reporting back to one’s male peers the victory of “hooking up” with a number of young women and/or a young woman who is considered attractive by the young man’s peers. The “hookup culture” that exists on college campuses all over the country (Bogle, 2008; Garcia and Reiber, 2008; Fielder and Carey, 2010; Gray and Garcia, 2012; Lewis et al., 2013) is founded on the tenets of hegemonic masculinity. As discussed in Chapter 3, experts in the field of masculinity studies have identified 11 distinct factors that they use to measure conformity to hegemonic masculinity. This tool, which they call the “Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory” (CMNI), consists of the following behaviors and values: (1) Winning, (2) Emotional Control, (3) Risk-Taking, (4) Violence, (5) Dominance, (6) Playboy, (7) Self-Reliance, (8) Primacy of Work, (9) Power Over Women, (10) Disdain for Homosexuals, and (11) Pursuit of Status (Mahalik, Locke, Ludlow, Deimer, Scott, Gottfried & Freitas, 2003). A pioneer in the field of masculinity studies, O’Neil (1986) argued that conformity to masculine social norms inhibited men’s development and health in myriad ways. Since then, several decades

of research have confirmed that adherence to the CMNI has negative consequences to men's physical, psychological, emotional, and relational health (Courtenay, 2011; Kilmartin, 2010; Smiler, 2013; Way, 2011). In this context, "hooking up," for college men, is less about individual desire and more about conforming to group norms that define what it is to be a "real man." In light of the CMNI factors, hooking up is an expression of masculinity that involves at least 7 or 8 of the 11 behaviors/values: (1) Winning, (2) Emotional Control, (3) Risk-Taking, (4) Dominance, (5) Playboy, (6) Power over Women, (7) Pursuit of Status, and, at times, (8) Violence. Ultimately, hooking up is a pursuit of status for men above all else.

Thus, the gender role that college men perform is that of the sexual animal, whose "natural" state is to have uncommitted sex with as many women as possible in his youth. He is emotionally in control, which means being cool and detached. He doesn't need to get dressed up. Why should he? The women should flock to him because of his physical prowess and charisma. He is likely an athlete, and he takes risks. His mantra is, "Work hard. Play hard." Therefore, he takes risks in sport, with alcohol and drugs, with women, and at times with the law. Because of the sexual double standard that exists within hookup culture, he does not need to worry about his reputation being tarnished by having uncommitted sex. The risk that he takes is primarily physical: the risk of contracting an STI. Beneath the veneer of masculinity, however, men actually take the risk of developing emotional attachment to their hookup partner, an attachment they are discouraged from acknowledging by their male peers, and which they self-police within the parameters of hyper-masculine culture.

For college women, on the other hand, hookup culture and the night life that surrounds it are much trickier terrain. Because so much emphasis is placed on physical attractiveness for women in our society, young women feel pressure to dress up when they go out at night. As young

women transition from living under the supervision of their parents (or legal guardians) to living on their own in college, many experiment with dressing “sexy,” an experience that can be simultaneously liberating and constraining. Many of my informants described a “Night/Day” split between dress codes for women dependent on social context. Female students, especially at the elite schools, felt they had to conform to one style of dress for going to class and another style of dress for going out at night. This meant that they had to invest more time and energy in “body projects,” as well as more time and money on their wardrobe, relative to their male counterparts. It also meant they had to walk a fine line between looking “sexy” and looking “slutty” at all times. From a sex-positive perspective, dressing in “sexy” clothes that show off her body can be a liberating experience for a woman. This presumes of course that women are free and safe to dress in any style without the threat of sexual harassment and/or sexual assault. Insofar as the college women I spoke with were “free” to dress sexy, they felt the option was only available to them at night and came with increased risk of uninvited sexual touch. They talked about how if a female was caught wearing the same clothes to class as she had worn out the night before, she would be considered “slutty.” In contrast, men tended to dress the same way to class as they did going out at night.

Further, the women at Legacy University experienced additional confusion as a result of the varying standards of dress that existed among SSCs. Some students remarked that first-year students were especially vulnerable to pressure to conform to standards of dress and social interaction within the hookup culture. Amanda, a junior and a leader in her SSC, described how she has gained confidence in her ability to ignore hookup culture as she has progressed from incoming freshman to upperclassman.

Amanda: I would say now I've figured it out. You come on this campus and you're like a deer in headlights. How things work here: people go to “SSC row” and then they hook up. I have figured out my role in that I guess. It's

always easy to tell who the freshmen girls are because they show up to “SSC row” in their heels and short little miniskirts. It’s like they’re going out to look extra promiscuous or whatever it might be and we’re like, “They just don’t know.”

EM: What about the men? Do they dress differently? Do they get more dressed up?

Amanda: I wouldn’t say so. If anything, they dress down more. On that note, it’s interesting, this was one of the things I looked at, just looking at all the social groups I studied. Certain SSCs have certain stereotypes and there are certain people on this campus that feel they have to dress one way versus another way if they go to one club versus another, on a night out. One is a more elitist, pretentious, hoity-toity club and people set, maybe not so much as an upperclassman, but as a freshman felt this social pressure to present themselves in a certain way if they went there.

Indeed, the culture of wealth and power that influences the school culture overall also informs the culture(s) of the SSCs at this elite institution. Style of dress serves as a symbol of many things: wealth, social status, body capital, cultural capital, and gender identity, among others. The correlation between social class and body image cannot be overlooked here. It is a cliché but nevertheless a lingering social phenomenon that among women of wealth and privilege (especially white women), “one can never be too skinny or too rich.” Being thin and “not too muscular” was indeed considered the ideal body type for females at Legacy University. While both men and women experienced pressure to look “fit” at Legacy University, dressing “sexy” and fear of being perceived as “slutty” was a body image issue that was unique to the women in my study, especially at the elite schools. Thus, the gender role that college women perform is that of the “Barbie by Day/Bunny by Night.” As far as risk-taking, in addition to the risk of contracting an STI, women also risk getting pregnant, a risk that is not shared by men who partake in sex without commitment.

As my informants described, the rituals and behaviors that take place within hookup culture often amount to sexual harassment. These include everything from uninvited sexual dancing, grinding, and groping of women’s breasts and buttocks; to sexually degrading verbal comments; to the chanting and banging on walls that Hope described as men’s “war cry.” When sexual harassment is normalized, as it is within hookup culture at colleges around the country, sexual

assault is not viewed as a transgression of cultural norms, but rather as an extension (or confirmation) of those norms. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the social norms upholding hegemonic masculinity and hookup culture foster an atmosphere of “rape culture” on college campuses that all too often lead to sexual violence. The students at the four schools I visited reported that this kind of hookup culture was especially prevalent within the Greek System and other kinds of SSCs, as well as men’s sports teams that bring a lot of attention to the university (e.g. football, lacrosse, basketball). As Mary from Whitney described in Chapter 3, she and a large group of female students were served punch that was spiked with date rape drugs at a fraternity party. Neither she nor anyone she knew of reported this incident to university authorities or police because, Mary felt, the university had a history of protecting its athlete-perpetrators (whom she refers to as the “untouchables”) over its victims.

I found that this brand of hookup culture was strongest at Legacy University, followed by Whitney University, somewhat prevalent but not as strong at Acorn University, and the least influential at Jackson University. Notably, the role of SSCs in social life for the student body at large (heavily driven by sororities and men’s varsity sports teams) was the strongest at Legacy University. In contrast, many students at Whitney University rejected traditional fraternities and sororities in favor of what they called Selective Living Groups (SLGs). At both State schools, fraternities and sororities existed but did not dominate social life for the student body at large. And at Jackson University, students reported that several factors disrupted social life at their school: (1) much of their population was made up of commuter students, (2) the majority of students who lived on campus during the week fled the campus most weekends, and (3) women outnumbered men by about two to one.

Effortless Perfectionism & Body Projects at Whitney University

At Whitney University, fifteen of the seventeen female students I interviewed cited body image as a problem for women of their generation. Of these, nine students talked about gendered self-presentation in relation to “effortless perfectionism” as a social problem within their elite school’s culture. This was the most commonly cited theme connected to gender and the body at Whitney, and it runs throughout two of the other chapters on “Gender and Work” and “Gender and Sport,” as it is an all-encompassing kind of pressure experienced by women at elite institutions. As I discuss in Chapter 1, many elite female students cited “effortless perfectionism” as a cultural norm in the highly competitive environments at their schools. Women in these environments felt pressure to achieve perfection in all areas of their lives, while maintaining a veneer that everything came easily to them. In Goffman’s terms, they felt intense pressure to present their “frontstage” selves at all times, never allowing anyone to peek “backstage.” As many students observed, “effortless perfectionism” is a social phenomenon that is particularly prevalent but not unique to Whitney University. It exists at other elite institutions and within other highly competitive environments. The media also plays a role, as some students pointed out. Another factor at play is the patriarchal histories of elite institutions, and the lingering traditions and cultural norms that remain long after women have been admitted to these universities. As one student put it, the environment at Whitney is one where women strive to “appeal to males” and men have “the upper hand.” Indeed, the social norm of hegemonic masculinity that exists within patriarchal institutions creates an atmosphere where women understand their place is less secure than their male counterparts.

Thus, the social norm of “effortless perfectionism” is a gendered phenomenon, whereby women are held to a different standard than men due to their historic subordinate social position.

For women, the ideal body type is based on an unattainable fantasy where fat-phobia is taken to an extreme and “too much” muscle or muscle in the “wrong places” is viewed as masculine. This is the ideal body type that college women at both Legacy and Whitney described. In this section I discuss “effortless perfectionism” as it relates to the body practices of: (1) disordered eating, (2) obsessive exercising, (3) conformity in style of dress, hair, and makeup practices, and (4) cosmetic procedures and cosmetic surgery.

Effortless Perfectionism & Disordered Eating

Of the nine students at Whitney who named effortless perfectionism as a social problem at their school, five cited disordered eating as a body practice linked to this phenomenon. Mary, a public policy major from Tennessee, who identifies as both white and Cherokee, was in her second semester of her freshman year at the time of our interview. She spoke about how the beauty ideal (what I call the “Barbie” type) at her school impacted her self-esteem when she gained weight her first semester, as is developmentally typical of young women transitioning out of adolescence into young womanhood.

Mary: I would say tall and skinny. Everybody thinks volleyball is really pretty, because they're all really tall and very, very skinny. People here generally are just obscenely skinny, like everyone's very, very healthy. There's definitely emphasis on, you know, maintaining your health. I would say most of the kids probably came from middle class or above families, so I think that comes with more emphasis on healthy eating. They have access to all that sort of stuff. So, everyone's very, very skinny and that's definitely the reason I struggle. I kind of gained the “freshman 15” and felt like I immediately had to lose it, which I did, but it was very -- I was very upset about it because I always have been like, “I'm skinny and short.” That was kind of my thing and then I was like, “Oh, wow, I gained 15 pounds!” When my mom came she was like, “Wow, Mary!” She wasn't like, “You got fat,” she was like, “You gained a lot of weight.”

EM: Are you aware of people who struggle with that issue and are not eating healthy or not necessarily working out just for health?

Mary: Yeah, my roommate definitely doesn't work out and does not eat healthy. And I know she struggles with her body image because of that. But I don't think she knows about fixing it or how to deal with it or anything. I had an eating disorder before. There's a lot of pressure on everyone to be perfect in just about every way, so skinny, smart, you know, pretty, making big changes in the world or something crazy. You're supposed to have everything figured out, so I think it's very problematic. I have a friend who also gained weight and we were like, “Let's go on a diet, like workout and stuff,” and then I noticed that I was doing it healthy and she just quit eating. She was like “I'll just quit

eating," and I'm like, "You can't just quit eating! You have to eat something," so her option instead of trying to figure out how to diet was just to do it fast and starve herself.

Amy, a white feminist from Virginia double majoring in public policy and women's studies, was in her senior year at the time of our interview. In Chapter 3, Amy spoke about intervening in a potential rape at a fraternity party. Here, she speaks about how her struggles with body image that began in high school manifested into an eating disorder that worsened when she arrived at Whitney:

Amy: You know, 60% of college age women suffer from some form of disordered eating. I struggled with [an eating disorder] in high school but it got a lot worse in college, because I lost 15 pounds before I got to Whitney and then it became very much about keeping it off kind of thing. And I definitely viewed it as something that I was highly impacted because of my gender, because I feel that women tend to be valued for the way they look first. I don't think that Whitney is at all special in terms of issues that women are facing. I definitely think particularly that a lot of lead institutions, a lot of my friends that, you know, have gone to different places talked about the exact same thing. So I don't think it's specific to Whitney at all. I think it is sort of specific to a high achieving community. It's not like a basketball game where you're starting at 0 and putting points on the board. It's like an exam where you're starting with 100 points and each time you mess up, you automatically are losing and it's like just trying to maintain that perfection. And one mistake, you're not there anymore.

EM: What are some mistakes that can take points off the board?

Amy: Definitely body image stuff. I have more friends than not that have body image issues or have been diagnosed with eating disorders or have at some point in their lives struggled with body image. When I think of the way women are impacted, whether or not they have suffered from an eating disorder or been sexually assaulted, there is a culture in place that makes those things okay or normalized in a way.

Lucy, a biology major from northern California who identifies as Hispanic, was a senior at the time of our interview. As an athlete who played soccer competitively in high school, plays tennis, and runs, she felt it was difficult for female athletes to conform to the "Barbie" body ideal. She talked about the prevalence of eating disorders among young women at Whitney and her own path to body-positive self-acceptance.

Lucy: A lot of women came out with eating disorders and it was really moving because, you know, by them doing this campaign, they were really taking a stand against eating disorders and the idea of all the expectations and misconceptions.

EM: And do you know people who have eating disorders or who have recovered from them?

Lucy: Yes. I think it's pretty big at Whitney University and for women our age. I meet a lot of people at Whitney University who have struggled with body image, including myself. I would say that personal image is a source of struggle. When you start off your college experience, you really want to fit in. So I've kind of noticed myself taking this transition out of like shallow beauty. The past two years I've kind of really taken on this role of, you know, health ... like a lot of girls will just live off power bars and chocolate pretzels and salads and you know, that's not really healthy. And so I have started to transition towards this idea that beauty is this kind of, like this more healthy ... and just having a full body doesn't necessarily mean that you're not beautiful and I think that's something that as you grow and go through college and grow as person, you kind of know that. And when you develop yourself as a person, you don't need all those superficial identifiers and I'm just so much more comfortable with who I am now.

As depicted in the stories that these three students shared, the pressures of “effortless perfectionism” are very real for young women at elite institutions, particularly in their first year of college. One of the strategies that many young women employ in their quest to conform to ideal body images, is disordered eating. Disordered eating includes but is not limited to anorexia nervosa and bulimia. It also includes drastically reducing caloric intake, partaking in unbalanced diets that do not provide sufficient nutrients, and taking “medicinal” measures to lose weight such as diet pills and/or laxatives without the supervision of a doctor. Another strategy many young women employ in the quest to attain the “perfect” body is obsessive exercising.

Effortless Perfectionism & Obsessive Exercising

As already noted, college women in elite environments feel they must be “perfect” or at least project an image of perfection to those around them to prove their worthiness as a member of the elite community. The myth of “effortless perfectionism” is a social norm for women at elite schools, which perpetuates the idea that women’s value is largely dependent upon their perceived attractiveness to (heterosexual) males. As Bordo (1993) has argued, the body becomes the site on which social norms and values are inscribed. Since women in our culture are socialized to believe that we are less valuable to society if we don’t live up to beauty ideals, we collectively engage in all kinds of body practices and rituals in our quest to conform to unrealistic standards. One of the body practices that students frequently reported was linked to “effortless perfectionism” was obsessive exercising.

Blithe, a white sociology major who spent her childhood in Colorado and moved to southern California in middle school was a senior at the time of our interview. Despite having done work in high school to raise money for girls' education in impoverished countries, she says she did not understand what the feminist movement was until she took a "Women as Leaders" course at Whitney. Like many students of her generation, she says there was a stigma attached to feminism, and cites "bra-burners" and "shrill women" as stereotypes associated with the word. Here she talks about the gendered nature of "effortless perfectionism" and the role it plays in the overall culture at Whitney.

Blithe: I think that the men definitely are in control. And at Whitney, there's especially this notion of "effortless perfection" for women. And I think that almost gives men more control largely because there's just so much pressure on females to look their best, be the best at school, have a great social life, and all of these things ... I mean, it's pretty much impossible to do all of these things, whereas males, there isn't as much pressure. The culture at Whitney is to one, look your best, be physically fit, go to the gym all the time and to excel at academics, basically excel at everything but not show that you are really putting a lot of effort into those things, that those things just come naturally to you.

EM: And that's not the same pressure for the male students?

Blithe: No, I don't believe so.

EM: Why do you think there's a gender difference there?

Blithe: I think that some of it is, especially the part of looking physically fit, I think a lot of that is just the media. I mean, all over the nation women have a much larger rate of eating disorders than males. And the other part ... I wish I knew where that came from, all the other portions of that. I think a lot of it is just kind of to appeal to males and so that gives males the upper hand.

Corey, a black feminist from southern California who plans to work in the TV/film industry, was a senior at the time of our interview. She is a talented athlete who plays a variety of intramural sports at Whitney. In high school she played wide receiver on the football team and, not surprisingly, was the only female player in an otherwise all-boys league. Here she shares her thoughts on the notion of "effortless perfectionism" that so many of her female peers are influenced by at Whitney:

Corey: For me the high school I went to was like that. That place was like effortless perfection. I went to the school where Einstein used to study. It was just crazy. It really messed up my self-esteem over time and so coming to Whitney was so great where I could take classes about black popular culture, music, film, and stuff that mattered. So

I think that finding something that I was really passionate about to study helped. In terms of the “effortless perfection” thing, none of it seems effortless to me. Maybe some people are tricked by that but there’s a lot of issues: eating disorders, girls running 24/7, they are so thin. Yeah, none of it seems effortless!

Because Corey had encountered the myth of “effortless perfectionism” at her elite high school in California, she felt she had already overcome the blow to her self-esteem that resulted from the social norms of that competitive environment. For Corey, engaging in coursework that aligned with her passions had an empowering effect, and she was less vulnerable to the pressures of “effortless perfectionism” at Whitney than most of her peers. Also, partly because of her experiences in football as the only female in an all-male environment, Corey knows first-hand what it feels like to work hard not just to perform on the field but also to be respected by male teammates and opponents. She knows this requires a great deal of effort and therefore outright rejects the notion of “effortlessness” that other women find harder to shirk. Thus, Corey sees quite clearly that “effortless perfectionism” is a myth. Unlike field hockey and tennis, in which women are required to wear skirts and are expected to perform the gendered role of “lady” while competing, football is clearly a macho sport. Since Corey’s primary sport is one which continues to symbolize masculinity in our culture, in which men compete with other men, and rough bodily contact is part of the game, she is used to “playing with the boys” on their terrain and according to their rules. This is not to say that women who play in all-female or mixed-gender environments do not work just as hard. Rather, embedded in the culture of other sport environments where women compete is the notion that female athletes must also perform their femininity to counteract the transgression of engaging in an activity (athletic competition) that continues to be associated with masculinity. What struck me in hearing from Corey about her football experiences and her clarity on the myth of “effortless perfectionism” is that she did not report feeling conflicted between her identity as an athlete and her identity as a woman, as other female athletes in this study described. She did not feel compelled to downplay her physical capability in order to be

perceived as “feminine” enough to appeal to males. On the contrary, she described the need to showcase her abilities so that men would throw her the ball. Additionally, Corey talked about playing for the love of the game, for the enjoyment she got out of playing football, basketball, and soccer. In contrast, she noticed that a lot of women on her campus had become obsessed with exercising to burn calories and lose weight.

As Corey’s and Blithe’s observations of “girls running 24/7” and “going to the gym all the time” highlight, the social norm of effortless perfectionism at Whitney drives young women to exercise not simply for the love of their sport or for a desire to “maintain their health.” Rather, the normalization of striving to be “perfect” in all aspects, but especially in physical appearance, is the primary motivation for women who exercise compulsively.

Effortless Perfectionism & Conformity in Body Practices

Of the fifteen students at Whitney who cited body image as a social problem for women of their generation, seven talked about the extreme pressure they felt at their school, and in general, to look “pretty” or “sexy” depending on the time of day. Six of these seven women linked the problem primarily to “effortless perfectionism” at Whitney, while the seventh attributed the pressure more to media images in the wider culture. Three of the seven students talked about the pressure to adhere to an elite style of dress during the day that required significant amounts of economic capital to comply with. All seven students described a “Barbie” ideal body type (tall, skinny, light-skinned, long hair) that they felt was the standard at Whitney University. In response to the pressure they felt, these students participated in body practices such as conformity to night/day dress codes, compulsory hair and makeup, as well as diet and exercise practices that sometimes were taken to extremes, as already discussed.

Lucy, the athletic biology major who talked about her path to body-positive self-acceptance earlier, emphasized that the social norms at Whitney relative to gender, ideal body type, and exercise were such that it created conflict between being an athlete and fitting into the culture of femininity.

Lucy: Can you imagine being an athlete, having to go to practice and be a Whitney University student and still look pretty? Like after playing soccer you don't look pretty! You're bruised up and stuff like that. And so, you have to really focus on being hard core and athletic on the field.

EM: That sounds like you're saying "When you're exercising, that's considered not pretty".

Lucy: I'm just saying that it's hard to do all those things and I think that the normal way that women exercise, being an athlete is like a whole type of different strength activity. And exercising that much is hard on your body and also, I think female athletes have to weight train and stuff and those just aren't the normal muscles that women on Whitney University's campus try to develop.

As I discuss at length in Chapter 2, female athletes face a dilemma in the conflict between the “Barbie” ideal body type that informs high-fashion and the ideal body type of the athlete that is based on strength and endurance. Tellingly, Lucy’s use of the word “normal” in the above passage to describe both the “way that women exercise” and the “muscles that women on Whitney’s campus try to develop” confirm that it is normative at her school for women to engage in the body practice of compulsive exercise to conform to the “Barbie” beauty ideal rather than exercising to “maintain health” or to get strong. In addition to the body practices of disordered eating and compulsive exercising, female students at Whitney also talked about social pressures to conform to particular styles of dress, hair, and makeup to achieve the normative beauty ideal.

Kristin, a white evolutionary anthropology major who plans to become a veterinarian, is an experienced equestrian and belongs to a sorority at Whitney. She does not identify as a feminist, but says she does believe in equal rights, and associates feminism with activism. She reported that the biggest issue for her at Whitney related to gender is the threat of being assaulted, as mentioned

in Chapter 3. On the subject of body practices, she cites the pressure to conform to an elite style of dress that was unfamiliar to her coming from Key Largo, Florida where surfing apparel is the normative style of dress.

Kristin: I think from that kind of social standing there is definitely a pressure to...I feel like everyone kind of dresses in a similar fashion. I don't know what you call it ... it's like leggings and leather boots and a nice sweater and scarf like just ... dressing nicely. That's kind of how everyone dresses.

EM: And what about for male students? Would you say there's a dress code for males?

Kristin: It's pretty fratty, pastel colored pants and polo shirts or something like that.

Conformity to an elite style of dress was a topic that a number of other students at Whitney mentioned, as well as students at Legacy. This was an especially common complaint among students who preferred other styles of dress such as “bohemian” or “sporty” and among students who lacked the economic capital to afford designer labels. In my participant observation of students during my visits to the campuses I noticed that students at the elite schools tended to dress up for class, while student at the state schools tended to dress more casually. I also noticed that there was a great deal more conformity in style of dress at the elite schools, while at Acorn there was significant diversity in how students chose to dress. Some students dressed up and others dressed more casually. At Jackson students almost universally dressed casually.

Michelle, a black feminist who attended public high school in Georgia, is from a single-parent household. Michelle is a psychology major whose career goals include working as an administrator in higher education and starting her own non-profit to uplift girls from marginalized communities with self-esteem issues. In this passage she articulates how “effortless perfectionism” is a form of oppression for women at her school, and how the social norms at Whitney differ from where she grew up.

Michelle: The idea of “effortless perfection” on this campus, just like feeling like she has to be pretty all the time, she has to be made up all the time. She needs to be smart but not “too smart,” and she needs to be fit but not “too fit” or like “too muscular.” I heard a definition of oppression is that you can’t go either way so you’re just being pressed into this really slim definition of what you can be. I definitely think “effortless perfectionism” is a phenomenon at Whitney. And just going by my feelings and feeling so much pressure so heavily here. If it is a phenomenon at home it’s not as big of a deal as it is here. And that might simply be because here you have to look good. But you also have to make the 4.0 GPA and have the perfect internship. Back home, you just need to look good and make ends meet.

Michelle’s description of the phenomenon of “effortless perfectionism” which exists at Whitney and in other elite environments matches the accounts I heard from the other female students at the elite schools in this study. Michelle insightfully links “effortless perfectionism” with oppression, a feeling that one is confined to extremely narrow choices of self-expression. Likewise, Amy, the Virginia student who shared her struggles with an eating disorder, recounted that she felt the culture of “effortless perfectionism” at Whitney was sending her confusing messages. In response to those messages, she explains her disordered eating as a reaction communicating, “I don't know what you want me to be! So I'm going to make myself the smallest possible, so there's nothing left for you to pick part.” Indeed, women in elite environments get the message that they should be “smart” but not “too smart,” “athletic” but not “too muscular,” “pretty” but not “too pretty,” “sexy” but not “too sexy,” “skinny” but not “too skinny.” As Victoria Pitts-Taylor argues in *Surgery Junkies* (2007), women who undergo cosmetic surgery to achieve the beauty ideals that society pressures them to attain are then stigmatized for having employed “unnatural” methods to achieve those ideals. Pitts-Taylor argues that society pathologizes women who “go too far” or who have the unfortunate experience of a surgery not going according to plan, while celebrating women who engage in the “appropriate amount” of cosmetic procedures without “getting caught” or taking it “too far.” I believe our society pathologizes women who engage in disordered eating in the same way. While “dieting” is normalized, when taken “too far” we call it an “eating disorder.” For Whitney students, eating disorders are normalized in the context of “effortless

perfectionism” and only when they cross the fine line of looking “too skinny” is the body practice of disordered eating recognized as a problem.

Hookup Culture & Conformity in Body Practices

Many of my informants both at Whitney and at Legacy talked about the social pressures to conform to the values of “hookup culture.” Students at these elite schools described an environment where dating monogamously was unusual, and most students claimed they “didn’t have time” to date. A few students discussed body image in the context of women seeking bodily validation from hookup culture, including Alexi, a first-year student at Whitney. A white feminist from Colorado, Alexi is a political science major who wants a career in international relations. At the time of our interview she was enrolled in the women’s leadership program at Whitney. Here she critiques “hookup culture” as a social norm that facilitates low self-esteem in women. She describes how students who don’t enjoy randomly hooking up feel marginalized in a culture that pressures students to conform to a model of sex without commitment.

Alexi: What hookup culture creates in women are the people that are really self-conscious. Not necessarily self-conscious -- maybe that’s a judgment. Women who very much need to feel wanted to be happy. It’s really easy to do right? Go out and feel very wanted...that is so easy to do – and so in that way some women would be satisfied with it because there’s an opportunity. Some women are satisfied---the ones who want to feel wanted, but then the ones who don’t want or need that as regularly are largely unsatisfied. It’s something that a lot of people don’t talk about, but I’ve been a part of many conversations that are like, “You know I really don’t enjoy hooking up with people” it’s something that people don’t vocalize as much. So when they realize that it’s a common sentiment they’re surprised because it’s so prevalent.

Indeed, hookup culture serves a variety of functions in college culture and impacts women differently than men. As Alexi’s observation highlights, one of its functions is that it provides surface-level validation from others. It offers a sense of body validation that is often lacking for young women who feel insecure in a culture that bombards them constantly with media images of “perfect” bodies. Young women may feel self-conscious and insecure when they flip through the pages of *Vogue* magazine, watch “Keeping up with the Kardashians,” or see their friend’s latest

selfie on social media. To counter these feelings of insecurity, they may seek validation through hookup culture. When they dress “sexy” to get attention from men when they go out to a college bar on a weekend, it works. They might be satisfied with the validation they feel from flirting or dancing. Or they might take it a step further by “hooking up” with someone that night. Either way, when women seek this kind of bodily validation, they can usually find it. And in doing so, they conform to the rules of hookup culture (i.e. sexual interaction without commitment), while at the same time conforming to heteronormative beauty ideals.

Ideal Body Type: Media Images & Cosmetic Surgery

Of the fifteen Whitney students who cited body image as a social problem for women of their generation, four emphasized the link between media images and women’s self-esteem. These students cited: (1) the media practice of photo-shopping women’s bodies and (2) the body practice of cosmetic surgery as major sources of psychological dysfunction for women as a group. They noted celebrities such as Keira Knightly (a “Barbie” type who refused to have her breasts photo-shopped for a magazine cover) and Kim Kardashian (a “Bunny” type whose images are often photo-shopped and who has also undergone cosmetic surgery), who contribute to trends in fashion and ideal body types.

Rebecca, a white feminist who identifies as Jewish, spent her childhood in Philadelphia and moved to Florida in middle school. Her family’s gender model and social class status shifted when her father quit his job as a medical malpractice lawyer when Rebecca was eleven. Her mother, who had been a stay-at-home parent until that time, now teaches sixth grade, while her father drives a tourist trolley. Once an upper-class family with a traditional gender model, they are now a middle-class family with an egalitarian gender model. Rebecca plans to move to Los Angeles after graduating to pursue her dream of becoming a TV/film screenwriter. Well-versed

in both feminism and popular culture, she had many insights on the status of women in media representations. In this passage Rebecca links the phenomenon of “effortless perfectionism” at Whitney to the unattainable beauty ideals we see in the media and hear in pop music.

Rebecca: When we see different body types basically now the expectation for women is to have the skin of a Latina, the backside of Kim Kardashian, the waist of a Barbie doll, you know. But now if you're a bigger girl then you should look like Kim Kardashian in that form. So I think that “effortless perfection” and sorority culture is a very real thing. So that's something I think is actively here and I do think women feel the pressure to be the Kim Kardashian and that even Nicki Minaj just singing about her big ass, like you have to have her *perfect* big ass. For example, “All About That Bass,” the new Megan Trainor song. She says, “It's pretty clear I ain't no size 2, but I can shake it, shake it like I'm supposed to do. Like you know I got that boom boom that all those boys chase, all the right junk in all the right places. My mama said, don't worry about your size. Boys like a little more booty to hold at night.” And so those lyrics right there -- So all of those things are defining herself in her appeal to men and having a heavier shape is good because she could still get guys as opposed to just love your body.

These kinds of observations linking media practices and cosmetic surgery to women's self-esteem were made by several of my other informants at Whitney, as well as a number of my informants at Jackson.

The Southern Lady and the Hourglass Figure at Jackson University

At Jackson University, six of the eight female students I interviewed cited body image as a social problem for women of their generation. I did not hear about the phenomenon of “effortless perfectionism” and few students were involved in SSCs. None of the students I interviewed at Jackson reported eating disorders or compulsive exercising as common among their peers, which is not to say these problems do not exist in their community, but that the students I interviewed did not raise these subjects. Within the larger theme of body projects, I found the concerns were more varied here than at the other three schools. Three students talked about pressures to conform to the role of “the lady” in Southern culture. Two students talked about the significance of beauty capital for women, one linking it to admittance to SSCs, and the other citing an advantage for women who are perceived to be “pretty” within the criminal justice system. One student talked about the media's role in perpetuating gender inequality through commercials that cast women as

housekeepers and men as office workers. What was similar between my findings at Jackson University and my findings at the elite schools was that women believed physical appearance matters more for women than it does for men. Women at Jackson University emphasized the importance of “looking good” for women as a group in ways that do not apply (or apply much less) to men. The three themes that emerged from my interviews with women at Jackson University were: (1) Being a Lady/Trophy Wife, (2) The Hourglass Figure, and (3) Beauty Capital.

On Being a “Lady” or a “Trophy Wife”

While the nuances of body image and gendered self-presentation were different at Jackson than at the elite schools in my study, the overarching theme of “body projects” was a thread that ran throughout my research at all four schools. Although I did not hear reports of: (1) Disordered Eating or (2) Obsessive Exercising at Jackson (as I did at Whitney), the body practices of: (3) Dressing to Conform and (4) Compulsory Hair and Makeup Maintenance were indeed salient. Three students discussed body projects in the context of pressures to conform to the gendered social roles of “lady” and “trophy wife.”

Deborah, a white single mother of a toddler who dreams of moving abroad to teach English, does not identify as a feminist. Nevertheless, she spoke at length about her frustrations with gender inequality and gender stereotyping. In this passage Deborah critiques gender stereotypes that are applied to women (like herself) who don’t conform to codes of dress and hair that are considered “feminine” in our culture:

Deborah: I do have one other thing to say. It just occurred to me like a freight train. And one of the things that I experienced just as a woman is actually my short hair. People always think -- and the way I dress -- people always think I’m gay. And I think that our society has pegged women who want to cut their hair short or want to dress more androgynous as being a homosexual even when they’re not. And people even have a tough time believing me and people always make assumptions about me and I wish that we as a society could change that. If I had to say one thing that is something that personally affects me all the time. I wish that we could come to a better understanding that all

men who dress “metrosexual” are not necessarily gay and women who are tomboyish and have short hair are not gay. Once people find out I was in the military they’re like, “Oh, that’s why you have short hair.”

Another student, Farah, the daughter of Palestinian immigrants, talked about her mother teaching her that she must present herself like a “lady” and not an “animal”:

Farah: For me I was taught, you know, you're a “lady.” You're going to be viewed as this precious thing and you have to uphold yourself in a quiet way. Not to be ... my mom called it, “Nobody here likes an animal.” I can't be an animal.

Another student, Sophia, the daughter of Puerto Rican immigrants, talked about the image of the “trophy wife” as a symbol of both wealth and gender inequality in American culture.

Sophia: In older times the trophy wife was defined as someone who was pretty, could take care of the family, clean and cook. And now it’s someone that’s educated, someone that’s smart, that’s beautiful, someone that can cook and clean.

For both Sophia and Farah, their family backgrounds work in conjunction with Southern culture to reinforce traditional gender roles of what it means to be a “lady.” Further, Sophia’s statement that the “trophy wife” is a symbol of femininity in American culture reflects gendered pressures to conform to a male breadwinner/female homemaker model, as well as unattainable beauty standards. As Sophia points out, in contemporary society, even “trophy wives” must also come across as “smart” and “educated” in order to increase their husband’s social status. The concept of an educated “trophy wife” reflects the same kinds of pressures and mixed messages described by women who talked about the pressures of “effortless perfectionism.”

The Hourglass Figure (or the “Bunny” beauty ideal)

In contrast with the “Barbie” beauty ideal, emphasizing a “skinny” aesthetic over a “curvy” one⁴⁸ which I found at the elite schools, the dominant beauty ideal at Jackson University was the

⁴⁸ See “Barbie’s New Body: Can Mattel save the iconic doll by making her look more like the rest of us?” *Time* 2/8/16.

“hourglass” model. I also call this the “Bunny” beauty ideal, as discussed in Chapter 2. While women of all races come in all shapes and sizes, it is important to note here that the “skinny” ideal is more prevalent among upper-class white and Asian women, while the “hourglass” ideal is more prevalent among black and Latina women. In line with this trend, I found the “skinny” ideal to be dominant at both Legacy University and Whitney University, the “hourglass” ideal to be dominant at Jackson University, and both ideals present (without one dominating) at Acorn University. In contrast with engaging in body practices such as: (1) Disordered Eating and (2) Obsessive Exercising for students aspiring to a “Barbie” beauty ideal, aspiring to a “Bunny” beauty ideal involved: (3) Dressing to Conform, (4) Engaging in Negative Talk about other Women’s Bodies, and (5) Experiencing Anxiety/Insecurity about not looking like celebrities who have undergone cosmetic surgery to achieve the “hourglass” look. Two of my key informants at Jackson University talked about the “Hourglass Figure” as the dominant beauty standard and connected this unattainable ideal to negative body image among women on their predominantly female campus.

Jada, a black sociology major who plans to become a dentist, is a member of a co-ed fraternity at Jackson that focuses on service to the community. She shared her view that the “hourglass” ideal is dominant at her school, and that female students experience insecurity about not being able to embody this beauty standard:

Jada: I don’t think ours is necessarily skinny. I think it's like, I don’t know, another one of those culture things I guess, but for the most part I think it's pretty much the same. No one wants to be like a stake here as far as I can tell, but they don’t want to be like, not a cow, but like bigger either. I noticed a lot of insecure females on this campus. Everybody just wants to be like an hourglass type of shape and a lot of people wear girdles and special bras. It's just they aren't comfortable in their own skin I guess. Just yesterday we had an event on campus and I went by myself. I was in line and it was a girl behind me and she was a bigger girl. She wasn’t like huge and she was just really loud, like laughing to the point where my eardrums almost busted. And she just kept talking about other people. She was like “Oh, look at her. She looks so sloppy. She needs to go workout.” I feel like you try to point out the flaws in other people to I guess shine more light on yourself.

Charlotte, a black English major and aspiring writer from a rural area in the South, spoke about the correlation between media images of celebrities who use cosmetic surgery to attain the “hourglass” figure and young women’s body image issues:

EM: Can you talk a little bit about images of women in the media and pop culture? Is there any one you think of as a feminist?

Charlotte: No. I think of women who mess up feminism.

EM: Could you give an example of that?

Charlotte: Nicky Minaj, most girls on Instagram. There are people who go through a huge transformation around the age of nineteen to the age of thirty something. Like people get surgeries to enhance their body, boobs, or change a different part of their face.

EM: You mentioned Nicky Minaj as an example. Why do you think of her as being someone who messes up feminism?

Charlotte: Anaconda, what's that song? I forgot, “Baby got back” do you remember that? Okay, she made a sample off of that. In that she says, "He ain't going to come down once unless you got buns," which means that he doesn't want to be with you or have sex with you unless you are thick. And she is not really technically huge, because her thickness comes from surgery. Because if you compare what she used to look like before she got famous today, it wouldn't be the same exact size. And it was like the more famous she got, the bigger her butt got, the wider her hips became, the bigger her boobs got, the more her nose and lips changed.

EM: What sort of impact do you think that has on young women and girls when they see famous people having plastic surgeries?

Charlotte: It makes them feel miserable, because they want to get surgeries to look like them as well. And if they can't get surgeries they will feel like, "Oh, I'm not going to be able to ... because she looks like this, and I don't look like her." But what they have is fake. It's just really confusing. And the Nicky Minaj thing, it's also her lyrics in the songs.

EM: So what are her lyrics about?

Charlotte: Oh, that song, she says, “F skinny, the worst, where are my big girls at? And it would make a whole lot of girls who are extremely skinny and the ones that can't gain weight feel bad. So it makes girls who can't gain weight feel upset and it uplifts the girls who are big.

On the surface it may seem that the beauty ideal of the “Hourglass” or the “Bunny” is more inclusive and somehow less harmful to women than the “skinny” aesthetic or the “Barbie” beauty ideal. Given the high rates of eating disorders among college women, a case could be made for that. However, as these students point out, the Hourglass beauty ideal also fosters low self-esteem in young women, and presents its own set of perils. Since women cannot exercise or eat their way

to the ideal hourglass body, there are only two ways to attain the look if one is not born with the genetic makeup of having a tiny waist and ample curves in the “right” places: (1) wearing Victorian-era type undergarments to cinch the waist and enhance the appearance of the breasts (such as girdles and shape-shifting bras) and (2) undergoing cosmetic surgery.

Beauty Capital

As I discuss in Chapter 2, beauty capital for women is a form of cultural capital that can also translate into economic capital. Two of my informants at Jackson University cited beauty capital as an advantage for women in particular contexts. Aliyah, a black social work major whose career goal is to do child advocacy work in an adoption agency, spoke about beauty capital in the context of women getting a “second chance” in the criminal justice system that is not afforded to men or to women who are not considered “pretty.”

Aliyah: Women are more likely to get a second chance. If she’s pretty then they’re like, “Oh, she couldn’t have done whatever crime. She’s nice, she’s pretty. But a man doesn’t get a second chance.

EM: Is this from personal experience or what you’ve seen ...

Aliyah: It’s just – yeah, just what I’ve seen. I feel like there’s more sympathy for women or women are underestimated a lot. I think if people knew – unlike men, want to realize like what women are really capable of. I don’t know. There’s a lot of just assuming that a woman is the weaker or the more gentle sex, but it’s not always the case.

Whether or not Aliyah’s statement reflects an accurate depiction of the criminal justice system, it’s interesting that her perception is that women who possess greater beauty capital fare better than men and their less attractive female counterparts.

Jada, the aspiring dentist, explained that certain sororities and fraternities have a reputation for its members holding significant beauty capital, while others are known for its members crossing a line into being perceived as sexually available (and not necessarily holding beauty capital). As

this passage depicts, young women walk a fine line between being perceived as “sexy” and being perceived as “slutty” in the college hookup culture, and especially within the Greek System.

Jada: And so is AKA which are the pretty girls. Delta Sigma Theta which are – I don’t know, that’s all pretty girls, I guess is. Kappa Alpha Psi which are the pretty boys, Alpha Phi Alpha which is the first Black men I guess. It became with one. They're black and gold. Zeta Phi Beta, so sweet they're like – I don’t know. And then the Sigma Gamma Rho out of the fact that we don’t have one on this campus. And oh, the “Key Dolls,” those are live and nasty, the nasty dolls.

EM: What does that mean?

Jada: Like everybody has a reputation I guess. They're like – everybody has an animal and everybody has – I don’t know, there's just like dolls and they're like bare women – I'm trying not to make this sound bad. They're not bad people.

Jada’s statement reflects the significance of beauty capital for young women pursuing membership in sororities and other kinds of SSCs. If she holds enough beauty capital to gain admittance to the club that is reputed to be the “pretty girls” she will likely be treated with a greater level of respect by her peers than if her physical appearance funnels her into the club that is known for dressing to attract sexual attention. As Jada’s description highlights, she can either be a “pretty girl” or a “nasty doll.” This dichotomy reflects an ongoing Madonna/Whore complex in SSC culture on college campuses, even at one where female students outnumber male students by a ratio of 2:1.

Sexual Harassment of Women in Public Space at Acorn University

At Acorn University, fewer women spoke about body image issues as a significant problem for their generation. Five out of the ten female students I interviewed mentioned the body or women’s appearance in some capacity. One student talked about how women in power get criticized for how they dress and how they look. Another student talked about government regulation of women’s bodies in the context of reproductive choice. The one recurring theme that emerged from my interviews with these students was the issue of sexual harassment. Three of the five women who spoke about body issues addressed this topic.

Brie is a white sociology major who plans to attend graduate school for social work. She is also a peer educator for the university's program to end sexual violence on campus and self-identifies as a feminist. On her short walk to meet me at the college's central coffee shop, she was sexually harassed by two different men, which she discloses in this passage:

EM: Can you think of one or two examples that have affected you personally in your life up to now that you would say are feminist issues or examples of a time when you experienced sexism?

Brie: Even just walking here today I got hit on by two different guys so that was fun [sarcasm]. Lots of street harassment, a lot of it. So actually not even once with me, but one time I was going out with a group of girlfriends. We were just walking to this party and these guys asked us where we were going and my friend was like, "Nowhere with you." and they called her "fat." It was like this huge issue. She was drunk and upset so we ended up going back, and consoling her. But it's just like ... just because you don't accept their cat calling you are automatically "fat" or a "bitch" or a "slut," which makes no sense, because you are not feeding into their sexism.

The examples of sexual harassment in public spaces that Brie shares highlight a number of gendered dynamics at play: (1) Women get harassed by men they do not know in broad daylight, completely unprovoked; (2) When women reject men's initial harassment, they are usually harassed even further, with sexually degrading epithets such as "bitch" and "slut"; (3) Female college students get harassed by both their male classmates as well as other men in public spaces. The practice of sexual harassment, especially when it takes place publicly, is a practice deeply rooted in hegemonic masculinity. Just as "hooking up" is a pursuit of status, sexually harassing women is also an attempt by males to gain social status among their male peers. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the CMNI identifies 11 distinct factors used to measure conformity to hegemonic masculinity. In light of these factors, street harassment is an expression of masculinity that involves 8-9 of the 11 behaviors/values identified by the CMNI: (1) Winning, (2) Emotional Control, (3) Risk-Taking, (4) Violence, (5) Dominance, (6) Playboy, (7) Self-Reliance, (8) Power Over Women, (9) Pursuit of Status. Just as "hooking up" is an expression of masculinity that men perform largely to prove their masculinity to other men, street harassment is another expression of masculinity that men perform in large part to prove their masculinity to the men (or boys) around

them. In this context, harassing women is less about individual motivations, and more about conforming to group norms that define what it is to be a “real man.”

Alison and Robin, two students featured in the Introduction who spoke about sexual harassment in public spaces, are both active members of a grassroots feminist group at Acorn that they call “WOAH,” which stands for “Women Organizing Against Harassment.” Alison is a white social work major who plans to work with children and adolescents. Robin is a black public health major who wants to be an event planner in the non-profit sector. The following excerpt is from a joint interview with these two young women, in which they discuss their experiences and reasons for organizing to end sexual harassment:

EM: Do you feel like it happens regardless of what you are wearing? For example, does it happen more if you're wearing a dress?

Alison: No. It definitely happens and it doesn't matter what I wear even in sweatpants honestly, but I recently started – we had a conversation a few weeks ago with our other friend who was talking about girls who wear hijabs. It's not necessarily like a religious requirement, but it's like something that women wear for privacy and for like kind of protection or like a sense of self. And you show your hair with people who are close to you because your hair is your glory or something.

I really like that idea. We were talking about it and so I wore a scarf the other night when I was going to the train station. It was night and I covered my hair with my scarf and like nothing happened. It's like nobody looked at me, like it was a completely peaceful walk. I walked from the student center to the train station.

EM: That's interesting.

Alison: Yeah, it was awesome!

EM: So why do you think that is?

Alison: I think that has religious issues – or not issues, but like connotation. Some people see a religious garment that they try to avoid it or look away. Also, I think that it has to do with hair a lot ... like long hair gets a lot of attention. I know you had an issue with wearing a scarf and people thought you were religious [speaking to Robin].

Robin: Yeah. Like I also wear scarves on my head ... when they match my outfit or when it's convenient or my hair isn't done. But recently when I've been putting it on, everyone is like, “Oh, are you Muslim now?” Like, “Oh, you're Muslim!” and I'm like, “No, it's just a scarf.” You know what I mean? But that one piece of fabric really – and like what you said about men not looking at you as much. I have that same experience. When I'm wearing my scarf, I feel like no one is looking at me.

Alison: It's awesome.

Robin: Yeah.

EM: Do you feel like it's out of respect?

Alison: I think it's just fear, like they don't want to get involved. I don't think it's respect. Maybe it's not giving men enough credit, but no.

Robin: Maybe also the scarf makes men see it ... like look at women as more modest. Well, I think that's the whole point, like it's looking modest, but I don't know. It's crazy because as soon as you take the scarf off it's totally different.

The stories shared by Alison and Robin highlight a couple of important points: (1) Sexual harassment of women is a “rite of passage” for adolescent boys in a culture that celebrates hyper-masculinity; (2) Women get harassed whether they are dressed up or dressed down; (3) Headscarves had the effect of deterring men from harassing women, as they have come to represent notions of “modesty” by their association with Muslim women (at this particular moment in time and in this cultural context: Spring 2014 at Acorn University). The values of “rape culture” are also embedded in the practice of sexual harassment, as I discuss in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

The three primary themes in this chapter that linked all four schools together were: (1) body projects, (2) gender performances, and (3) sexual harassment. Returning to the themes mentioned earlier, the sexual double standard and sexual assault were also primary concerns cited by female students across schools related to these broader themes. In this chapter, I drew on Foucault's concepts of “discipline” and “surveillance” to situate the social interactions that take place between and among college students. These social interactions are gendered and operate in a heteronormative framework, as Butler (1990) argued. I employ Butler's concept of “gender performance” to analyze how college students navigate hookup culture, gendered beauty ideals, and sexual harassment. Further, I argue that the social interactions of college students take place within a context of hegemonic masculinity, consumerism, and healthism (Crawford, 1980; Dworkin and Wachs, 2009) whereby men and women must transform themselves into the “right kind of objects.” I also utilized Bourdieu's concepts of “social capital” and “cultural capital” in this chapter to argue that the forms of capital available to students are gendered. For males, social

capital is gained by conforming to masculine norms. For instance, being a varsity athlete (a form of social capital) helps males gain admittance to prestigious SSCs. For females, being a varsity athlete is also a form of social capital, but beauty capital (being pretty, but not “too pretty”) and cultural capital (in the form of conforming to men’s interests) are also significant factors in gaining access to prestigious SSCs.

While there were differences between schools, I found that the concepts of “surveillance” and “discipline” applied universally across all four schools. Women at all four schools reported a sense that their bodies were being scrutinized by their peers and by society at large. While both women and men are subject to surveillance in today’s society, and both genders are confronted with media pressures to conform to ideal body types, I believe college women are especially vulnerable to body insecurity for two reasons: (1) the environment of a college campus creates a fishbowl-like atmosphere much like the “Panopticon” that Foucault describes, where the competition to “look good” among so many women of the same age cohort is more intense than in smaller, mixed-generation environments and (2) the ubiquity of sexualized images of female bodies in our society has intensified for millennials coming of age in the era of internet pornography, social media addiction, and “sexting.” These two factors converge to make college women particularly vulnerable targets of surveillance. As Foucault argued, individuals under surveillance learn “self-surveillance” as a strategy of survival. In this light, we can view women’s critiques of their own and other women’s bodies and bodily presentations as “self-surveillance.” This is not to say that college men are not also vulnerable to surveillance (indeed they are, as we tragically saw in the case of the Rutgers student who killed himself in 2010). Rather, this study found that college women were highly likely to report body insecurity, and that these women felt there was more pressure on them than their male counterparts to conform to body ideals.

In this chapter, I discussed “effortless perfectionism” as it relates to body projects. By body projects I refer to the “self-disciplinary” practices in the Foucauldian sense that individuals employ to achieve the appearance of an ideal body. I found that for women at the elite schools in this study, the “right” kind of body meant being tall, skinny, light-skinned, and having long hair. I refer to this as the “Barbie” body type. In contrast, I found that for women at Jackson University, the “hourglass” figure was the dominant ideal body type, which I refer to as the “Bunny” body type. For women at Acorn University, both the “Barbie” and “Bunny” ideal types existed without either one seeming to dominate. One of the differences I found between schools in this study was that the phenomenon of “effortless perfectionism” existed only at the elite institutions. I also found that “hookup culture” was more dominant at the elite schools, where SSCs played a more significant role in students’ social lives. In contrast, “hookup culture” coexisted with monogamous dating practices at the public schools. And at Jackson, students cited the higher female to male ratio as an obstacle in the context of heterosexual dating. Finally, sexual harassment was a social problem at all four schools. The students at Acorn emphasized this theme as an everyday social problem on their campus more than the students at the other three schools in this study.

Conclusion

Whereas previous research has largely been limited to quantitative studies highlighting unwillingness to identify with feminism among American youth, this study broadens the discourse on millennials and feminism by situating their feminist-identity within their everyday lives. In contrast with research that has emphasized students' unwillingness to call themselves feminist, this study shows that college students support gender equality and when offered a dictionary definition of feminism, the vast majority (80%) do in fact self-identify with the term. By employing a variety of methodological tools (i.e. open-ended and closed surveys in combination with semi-structured interviews), this project moves beyond simply capturing whether respondents think of themselves as "feminist" or "not feminist" at a particular moment in time. These findings demonstrate that it indeed matters how "feminist" is defined in survey research and that more qualitative research is needed in order to fully understand the complexities of gender issues and feminist-identity among college students.

Gender & Work: The Lasting Impact of the 'Separate Spheres' Model

Although the percentage of married women with children in the paid labor force increased from about 40% in 1970 to 70% by the year 2000, attitudes toward parenting and domestic labor have remained deeply gendered. My research demonstrates that college students are constrained in their thinking by a traditional family model that links masculinity with professional success and femininity with raising children. Thus, "choices" about work and family must be understood within a context of hegemonic masculinity. I found that female students experienced a great deal more gender-role conflict than their male counterparts relative to career and family aspirations. While both male and female students internalized the ideal worker model, female students also

internalized the ideal mother model, resulting in tension between two competing social norms. Of the students interviewed for this study, 91% of females talked about feeling conflicted between future work and family commitments. In contrast, none of the male students reported feeling conflicted in this arena. As such, I label this phenomenon the “feminization of the work-family conflict,” as the title of Chapter 1 reflects. My research adds to the discourse in the field of gender and work by demonstrating that women shoulder the burden of thinking, planning, and worrying about having children long before they actually have children. Just as Hochschild (1989) found that employed mothers subscribed to the myth of the “supermom” to their own peril, I found that women at elite colleges imbibed the myth of “effortless perfectionism,” which I argue is a gendered social script embedded in elite environments that serves to groom young women for their future roles as “supermoms.” Further, I argue that both myths serve to mask gender inequality in line with a Gramscian theory of cultural hegemony.

Gender & Sport: Dichotomous Categories and Ideal Types

This study also makes a contribution to the growing body of research in the sociology of sport in its examination of how gender identity, feminist identity, and athlete identity converge. In media imagery, female athletes are frequently portrayed as either sex objects (“Bunnies”) or fashion models (“Barbies”), both types serving the dual function of trivializing women’s sports, while alienating women from their own bodies in the context of rampant consumerism. As illustrated by the findings of this research, college students, especially athletes, internalize these cultural messages about achieving the “right kind of body” and these ideal body types are gendered within a context of dichotomous categories. For males, the ideal body types of “man” and “athlete” are simpatico, while for females the ideal body types of “woman” and “athlete” diverge.

My survey research indicates that male athletes are less likely than female athletes and male non-athletes to identify with feminism. This trend was confirmed by the interview findings, in which three themes emerged: (1) men poke fun at women's teams and put female athletes down by touting superior physical strength over women; (2) men fear losing to a woman in sport because it threatens their sense of masculinity; and (3) men fear hurting a woman in sport and therefore don't play as aggressively against female opponents as they do against male opponents.

Nearly two-thirds of the female students I interviewed cited sports as an area where gender inequality persists. The findings from these interviews indicate that the role of "athlete" is based on a male model that relegates women to second-class citizenship. In my conversations with female students, and especially with those who identified as athletes, the three themes that emerged from my interviews with males were confirmed and expounded upon. Additionally, two other themes came out of my interviews with women: (1) female athletes found themselves in a double bind with pressure to perform what they experienced as conflicting roles between (i) athlete and (ii) feminine persona; and (2) female athletes felt they needed to work harder than male athletes to prove their worth and earn the respect of male peers and coaches. In light of these qualitative findings, it is not surprising that female athletes were almost equally likely as female non-athletes to identify with feminism in the survey research.

Rape Culture: Disciplinary Power and Surveillance

The third chapter, "Rape Culture: a Collegiate and National Crisis," situates sexual assault in the broader context of a culture that objectifies and demeans women as a means of preserving the gendered social order. Examples of rape culture that arose from my interviews and observations included: (i) male-dominated leadership in selective social clubs; (ii) narrowly framed, male-dominated classroom discussion on the subject of rape, coupled with female

students' fear of speaking up; (iii) a female student at elite university being told to be quiet by a faculty member when sharing data on incidences of sexual assault in response to a question asked at first-year orientation; (iv) reports of fraternities sponsoring theme parties and hazing rituals that objectify and sexually exploit women; (v) reports of fraternities spiking drinks with date-rape drugs; (vi) feedback from students that victims of drugging at fraternity parties did not report the incidents to the police or to university officials; and (vii) pervasiveness of male-dominated hookup culture as the social norm, especially at elite schools. In this chapter I used Foucault's concepts of "regimes of practice" and "self-discipline" to help explain how and why rape culture operates within student populations. Drawing on the theory of "symbolic interactionism," I also argue that universities play a role in the production and reproduction of rape culture on college campuses.

Body Projects: Healthism and Gender Performance

Finally, in "Body Projects: Women's Bodies under Surveillance," I engaged Foucault's concept of "surveillance" to analyze how college students navigate "hookup culture," gendered beauty ideals, and sexual harassment within a context of hegemonic masculinity, consumerism, and healthism. I also drew on Butler's work on gendered self-presentation and Bourdieu's concepts of "social capital" and "cultural capital" to shed light on how and why college students conform to pre-established gendered scripts relative to bodily presentation. The findings from this study highlight that social norms and cultural practices vary from one context to another. At each of the four schools in this sample, I found different emphases in my interviews with students. At Legacy, my informants continually shifted the conversation to the role of SSCs in hookup culture, night life, and sexual harassment on campus. They emphasized heteronormative gender performances in which men played the sexually aggressive pursuers and women were expected to coyly deflect or accept their advances. At Jackson, hookup culture was also a recurring theme in

my interviews with students. However, the topic that students emphasized repeatedly was that of “effortless perfectionism” and body practices such as disordered eating, compulsive exercising, and conformity in style of dress and makeup maintenance. At Jackson, the three themes that emerged from my interviews were: (1) pressures to perform the role of “Lady” and the omnipotence of the “Trophy Wife” in popular culture; (2) the ideal body type of “The Hourglass Figure” for women; and (3) the significance of possessing beauty capital. At Acorn, the recurring theme that female students talked most about was the issue of sexual harassment. The students in this study reported that: (1) Women get harassed by men they do not know in broad daylight, completely unprovoked; (2) When women reject men’s initial harassment, they are usually harassed further, with sexually degrading epithets such as “bitch” and “slut”; (3) Female college students get harassed by both their male classmates as well as other men in public spaces. Just as “hooking up” is an expression of masculinity that men perform largely to prove their masculinity to other men, street harassment is another expression of masculinity that males perform largely to prove their masculinity to the other males around them. In this context, harassing women is less about individual motivations, and more about conforming to group norms that define what it is to be a “real man.”

Feminism as a Social Movement

As previously noted, feminism is more than a social identity. It is also an ideology that has fueled feminist social movements. Given the right political timing, effective leadership, and appropriate resources, it is possible that a contemporary feminist movement will succeed in mobilizing the human, economic, and cultural capital necessary to continue eradicating gender inequality in its many incarnations. Indeed, this research confirmed that the vast majority (80%) of college students embrace feminism as an ideology of social, political, and economic equality of

the sexes. Yet, in the absence of a definition, many were reluctant to associate themselves with feminism because of the cultural and political backlash against second-wave feminism at the end of the twentieth century, carrying over into the twenty-first century. This was reflected in the open-ended surveys, where 26% of elite students and 62% of public-school students did not self-identify as “feminist.” As noted earlier, 21% of students in open-ended surveys believed that feminists are extremists. Further, 11% held the belief that feminists are anti-male. These students understood that the word “feminist” had become stigmatized and that those who adopted the label risked social marginalization within their college community. This was especially the case at Acorn, where my interviewees reported that students affiliated with the WGS program were perceived as “crazy” or “extreme” by the general student population. As referenced earlier, social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) posits that a group must be perceived as positive in order for a person to identify with that group. Given that millennials were born between an era of political conservatism in the 1980s (marked by the election of Ronald Reagan and the failure to ratify the ERA) and an era of “postfeminism” beginning in the 1990s, it is not surprising that they have internalized the negative connotations that anti-feminists (e.g. Phyllis Schaffley) successfully infused into the public imagination following second-wave feminism.

Resource mobilization theory, which emphasizes the role of social movement leaders and their ability to mobilize resources (namely time, money, and energy), and direct those resources into effective political action, is useful here. The millennials in this study started high school during the George W. Bush Administration and the first term of the Obama Administration, between 2002-2012. During this period feminism remained stigmatized, while other social movements such as the environmentalist movement, the anti-war movement, the LGBT movement, and the Occupy Wall Street movement gained traction. Overall, students cited these

social movements as being more important (or more popular) among their generation than the feminist movement.

Verta Taylor's "abeyance" theory (Taylor, 1989) is based on the resource mobilization perspective, which I employ here to argue that the women's movement in the U.S. never ended. Rather, it has gone through periods of sustained activity followed by periods of abeyance. After the first wave of the feminist movement secured the legal right to vote for women in 1920, the women's movement went into a long period of abeyance until the 1960s, when the political and cultural climate was conducive to both a critique of the system and collective action to change the social order. Notably, another burst of feminist activity occurred in the 1990s during the two terms that Bill Clinton was President. This period is often referred to as "third wave" feminism, and lasted only up to the year 2000, when feminism again went into abeyance, coinciding with two terms of the George W. Bush administration.

It is through the lens of abeyance theory, stemming from the resource mobilization perspective, that I began this study of college students and feminism. I wanted to find out what students felt the climate was on their campus and in the wider culture relative to feminism. What was the surrounding political environment? The findings from this research indicate that the climate on college campuses was ambivalent to feminism at best and hostile to feminism at worst when I began the pilot study in 2010. By the end of 2014, when I finished the interviews for this project, the climate was still largely ambivalent and in some instances hostile to feminism. Yet I was hearing reports from students that feminism was slowly becoming a more popular subject of discussion on social media. Still, most reported that their peers shied away from self-identifying as feminist. A few students reported that they noticed a change in popular culture and on social

media around 2012, when more celebrities began to embrace feminism, including Beyoncé and Emma Watson.

The contemporary feminist movement is also a cultural battle to change social norms and values that constrain people of all genders. As I write this in 2016, the transgender rights movement has emerged as a social movement of national and global significance. When Caitlyn Jenner came out publicly in 2015, her celebrity status as an Olympic hero and reality-TV star tied to the Kardashians brought the subject of transgender identity fully into mainstream public discourse in the U.S. Since then, the 2016 North Carolina law banning transgender people from using bathrooms that match their gender identity has fueled culture wars, inspired boycotts, as well as sparked new legislation from the federal government securing the rights of transgender citizens. While my interviews with students preceded this recent attention to transgender issues, I did find that among those who identified as feminist, almost all emphasized “intersectionality” as key to the contemporary feminist movement.

The Evolved Concerns of Contemporary Feminism

The findings of this research highlight how the concerns of young feminists have evolved since the second wave. The four themes that dominated my interviews with college students outlined in the topical chapters of this dissertation highlight the progress that has been made in several key areas of gender equality. For instance, the issues of workplace equity and reproductive rights that feminists of the 1960s and 70s rallied around look very different today than they did fifty years ago. Still, there are many areas where gender inequality remains persistent. For this generation of feminists, the topics of gender and work, gender and sport, rape culture, and body projects are salient for a variety of reasons.

With regard to gender and work, second-wave feminists were concerned with access to jobs and educational opportunities that had previously been unavailable to them. In contrast, millennials have the privilege of critiquing the structures of those workplaces and universities that had once been closed to women. The students I spoke with cited glass ceilings, wage inequality, sexual harassment in the workplace, mommy-tracking, lack of adequate parental leave policies, and traditional gender ideology tied to raising children as obstacles for their generation. The second-wave movement was largely a battle to secure civil rights for women and girls. In contrast, the contemporary feminist movement is largely a battle to challenge social norms and values that inform policies, hiring practices, and social interactions within workplaces, families, and other social organizations. This will require millennials to take an active role in shaping policy. It will require them to make informed voting decisions, to speak up about inequality in the workplace and elsewhere, to demand equal pay, to advocate for paid maternity and paternity leave, and to think carefully about the kinds of partnerships they form.

Returning to the topic of gender and sport, we have certainly come a long way in terms of providing access to sports for girls and women thanks to the passage of Title IX. This was the work of second-wave feminists. In contrast, the work of contemporary feminists is to challenge social norms around masculinity and femininity that inform sport culture. The students I interviewed described a culture around sport in which men felt emasculated if they were not good at sports or if they lost to a woman. By the same token, women who excelled at sport felt they were often not taken seriously by male sport fans, peers, and coaches. They felt less valued as athletes by their universities. And they experienced anxiety as a result of conflicting social norms between performing “femininity” and performing their jobs as athletes. The issue of equal pay in

professional sports is also a key agenda item for this generation of feminists. Recently, members of the U.S. women's soccer team and Serena Williams have been vocal about this issue.

Notably, the topics of rape culture and body projects are salient for millennial feminists in part because of the successes of twentieth-century feminism. Since women can vote, run for office, apply to any school they want, and pursue a career of their choosing, we can channel our energy into other areas where gender inequality exists. For second-wave feminists the issue of reproductive rights was central to their agenda for full equality. With the introduction of the birth control pill in the 1960s and the legalization of abortion in 1973, the landscape of women's ability to decide whether and when to bear children shifted dramatically. Legalizing abortion was a long and arduous battle. But it gave second-wave feminists something to rally around. For today's feminists, the issue of reproductive choice is much more complex. It's largely about access. It's about social class and race. And religion. It's about where you live and if an abortion provider exists in your community. It's about the ongoing culture wars between the "pro-life" and "pro-choice" movements. It's about the practices of medical schools in training doctors to perform abortions. It's about including birth control and abortion in health care plans. It's about comprehensive sex education in public schools. And it's about keeping clinics open and ensuring the safety of medical providers and patients.

While some of the college students I interviewed mentioned abortion as an issue for their generation to grapple with, it was not a major theme across my sample. Instead, what students talked about far more was the topic of rape culture. For today's college students, this topic is salient because they experience a culture that trivializes rape and sexual harassment. Given the alarming statistics of rape on college campuses in the U.S. and the pattern of universities not following through on reports of rape on their campuses, it is not surprising that this was a recurring

theme in my interviews with college students. My informants talked about how rape culture is embedded in SSC culture, in sport culture, and in the wider culture of victim-blaming. At the elite schools in this study, students also expressed a general feeling that the administration would be more likely to side with perpetrators over victims, especially if the perpetrator was a varsity athlete. Female students almost universally cited sexual assault and sexual harassment as social problems on their college campuses. Further, they described a male-driven heteronormative hookup culture which masked these social problems by promoting a false narrative of sexual liberation. In this regard, millennials have something in common with the generation who came of age during the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s and so-called “free love.” Indeed, critics have pointed out that the idea of “free love” was often used by heterosexual men to pressure women into having sex or to mask what would now be understood as rape. Thus, “hookup culture” is to millennials what “free love” was to baby boomers.

Finally, the topic of body projects is salient to this generation of feminists due to a variety of factors including the intensification of consumerism, the intensification of celebrity culture, and the intensification of technology in everyday life. What Foucault called the “Panopticon” has grown stronger in the age of the internet with the ubiquity of cameraphones and social media. For second-wave feminists, the pressures to conform to an idealized image of “Miss America” were central to their rebellion against mid-twentieth-century beauty standards. The feminists who performed street theatre in protest of the 1968 Miss America pageant in Atlantic City threw girdles, aprons, hair curlers, and bras into a “freedom trashcan” labeling these items “instruments of torture.” While no fire took place that day due to their inability to get a fire permit, Robin Morgan gave a quote to a journalist covering the event referencing their intent to have a “good old-fashioned bra-burning.” And a media myth was born. One of the most frequently cited stereotypes

attached to feminism among the college students I surveyed and interviewed for this study, was indeed “bra burners.”

For second-wave feminists who wanted to be taken seriously in the workplace and in the public sphere, their primary complaint was that the focus on women’s bodies was trivializing, sexually objectifying, and domesticating. In contrast, today’s feminists are coming of age in an era where consumerism, media culture, and gendered beauty ideals have converged to promote the neoliberal concept of “healthism” in the twenty-first century. In this context, achieving the “right kind of body” is a signifier of morality and good character. Fat is viewed not only as “unhealthy” but also as a transgression of citizenship. While second-wave feminists critiqued the beauty standard set by the “Miss America” pageant, today’s feminists are confronted with new challenges. For one, images of women’s bodies are far more prevalent today than they were in the mid-twentieth century as a result of the intensification of consumerism, changes in technology, and the infusion of pornography into mainstream culture. Second, the beauty ideals that young women are socialized to believe they should aspire to are informed by bodies that do not exist in nature. The bodies of models and celebrities that millennials see on magazine covers and elsewhere are almost always digitally altered through photo-shopping or “airbrushing” the images to change body parts, remove wrinkles, and reduce the appearance of fat. Of equal significance, today’s beauty ideals are also informed by the rise of the cosmetic surgery industry. Through “reality TV” and advertising, millennials are exposed to all kinds of “beauty-enhancing” surgeries and procedures including Botox injections, breast augmentation, buttocks implants, lip implants, and liposuction, to name a few. What was once viewed as an option only for the very wealthy is now considered “normal,” as cosmetic surgery has steadily made its way into mainstream culture since the dawn of the twenty-first century. If a person was “fat” in the 1960s, they might try dieting and

exercise. Today, if diet and exercise alone have not resulted in the “right kind of body,” the “fat” person gets the message from our culture of “healthism” that cosmetic surgery is an option s/he should strongly consider if they are to be accepted as good citizens. Thus, young women and men coming of age today face even greater challenges with regard to body image than their mid-twentieth century counterparts. While this study did not yield data addressing men’s body image issues, men too are encountering increased pressure to conform to unrealistic body ideals. This is an area ripe for future research.

Recommendations and Future Research

As noted earlier, this study was limited by the somewhat self-selecting sample of students who volunteered to participate in interviews. At the elite schools my access to non-feminist students was particularly limited. Understanding the perspectives of elite students who don’t identify with feminism (both male and female) is a worthwhile endeavor, and this, too, is an area for future research. Similarly, this study was limited by the lack of representation of males from elite institutions. Again, understanding this group’s perspective is essential to understanding the whole picture relative to millennials and feminism. This is also an area for future research. Lastly, this study focused on the attitudes and experiences of college students themselves. While I conducted some interviews with university staff who worked on issues that I identified as feminist (e.g. Anti-Violence centers, Women’s Centers, and Women’s Leadership programs), these interviews served primarily to contextualize the data I collected from students. It was beyond the scope of this project to incorporate a comprehensive analysis of the structural supports for feminism within the universities, and further research would again be useful.

Given the attitudes of today’s college students with regard to feminism, it would benefit the contemporary feminist movement to be aware of the findings from this study. It would also

benefit universities and the federal government to critically examine the role of “rape culture” in their quest to end sexual violence on campus. Based on these findings, I have a number of recommendations, which I outline here:

--There is a need for continued support from the federal level acknowledging the prevalence of sexual assault and how “rape culture” attitudes persist within a context of hegemonic masculinity. Both the government and universities will need to be reflexive in their roles, considering the ways in which social norms and values perpetuating gender bias and rape culture attitudes exist within their own institutions.

--There is a need to educate University Administrators as to the nature and scope of sexual violence and ways to prevent violence, including sexual assault and sexual harassment.

--There is a need for “Gender Studies 101” to be more widely taught to the student body at large, given the lack of exposure to women’s history and lack of understanding of gender issues on a macro level among much of today’s college population. Since solving gender inequality requires an understanding of the issues, I recommend making it a requirement for all students in the humanities, and eventually for all students. There is also a need to integrate WGS themes into courses in other disciplines, not just those offered by WGS departments. By the same token, I recommend incorporating gender studies into the curriculum at the secondary education level, as not all students go on to attend college.

--Based on my interviews with students and university staff working within programs that address gender issues in some capacity, I found there is a need for more collaboration among WGS departments, Women’s Leadership Programs, Women’s Centers, Sexual Violence-Prevention

programs, grassroots student groups, and other Centers for Social Justice. Students and faculty alike reported low levels (if any) of collaboration on their campuses.

--Finally, there is a need for more Destigmatizing Campaigns to eradicate the stigma attached to feminism. A group of Whitney students launched such a campaign in 2012 on Facebook called, “Who Needs Feminism?” which showcases students holding up signs stating why they need feminism in their lives. This project and others such as Emma Watson’s “He for She” initiative to counter postfeminist ambivalence and the lingering “backlash” are exactly what the contemporary feminist movement needs to come out of abeyance and back into action in the twenty-first century.

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