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### Title

Do Women's Movements Include All Women?: A Social Ontological Evaluation of White Womanhood in the US

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**Do Women's Movements Include All Women?:**

**A Social Ontological Evaluation of White Womanhood in the US**

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**Table of Contents**

**Acknowledgements** ..... 2

**Abstract** ..... 3

**Chapter I: Background** ..... 4

**Chapter II: White Womanhood** ..... 8

**Chapter III: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Catharine Beecher** ..... 13

**Chapter IV: Betty Friedan and Phyllis Schlafly** ..... 39

**Chapter V: Conclusion** ..... 57

**Bibliography** ..... 59

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**Abstract**

White womanhood as a social ontological category has evolved as racial and gender power dynamics have evolved throughout US history. I build on research about White womanhood's relationship to racism in feminist and antifeminist movements to discuss the use of racism as a strategy to navigate racial and gender power dynamics. I first evaluated Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Catharine Beecher. These women were contemporaries on opposite sides of the suffrage movement. Stanton was a prominent feminist leader in favor of women's suffrage, and Beecher was a prominent antifeminist leader opposed to women's suffrage. Both White women utilized segregationist racist statements to make their ideas more receptive to the White men in power over the US government. I then evaluated Betty Friedan and Phyllis Schlafly. Friedan and Schlafly were contemporaries on opposite sides of the second-wave feminist movement. Friedan helped launch the movement, and Schlafly worked to dismantle the movement. Both White women utilized segregationist racism to assert power in the racial epistemology of the seventies. Overall, I identify that all of the White women studied, even being on opposite sides of the movement, utilized segregationist racism to navigate their time period's racial and gender power dynamics. All of the White women studied recognized they held a distinct position in the gender power dynamics of their time and utilized their Whiteness to overcome their gendered situations. As White womanhood continues to evolve, whether this trend will continue will point to the growth of antiracism or racism within feminist and antifeminist movements.

## **Chapter I: Background**

### **Section I**

#### **Goals**

This thesis's overarching goal is to analyze how White women interact with racial and gender power structures within feminist and anti-feminist movements. I do so through distinct ontological groups: patriarchal White women activists and antipatriarchal White women activists. Under patriarchal White women activists, I analyze Catharine Beecher and Phyllis Schlafly. Under antipatriarchal White women activists, I analyze Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Betty Friedan. I specifically chose these women because they formed pairs that were contemporaries with one another on opposite sides of feminist movements. Stanton and Beecher stood on opposite sides of the suffrage movement, and Friedan and Schlafly stood on opposite sides of the second-wave feminist movement. I then analyze the racist and antiracist actions of these four White women within their specific racial and gender power structures to demonstrate the usefulness of the patriarchal and antipatriarchal White women activist categories as an analytical tool. I identify that both patriarchal and antipatriarchal White women activists tend to perpetuate the same form of racism: segregationist racism. I argue that the situatedness of these White women within their power structures plays a motivating role in their use of racism. I also identify how these women shaped White womanhood in the US, particularly exploring Friedan's relationship to White feminism. Ultimately, I position the lives and actions of these women into the frameworks of power that existed during their activism.

### **Section II**

#### **Viewpoints and Their Importance**

In discussing racial and gender viewpoints, I refer to the knowledge subjects have of social constructs and how that knowledge has changed over time. Racial and gender viewpoints will point to the social norms that shape the power dynamics of specific periods.<sup>1</sup>

### **Acknowledging Racial Viewpoints**

Racism in the United States has had to adapt over time in order to survive. The racial viewpoint of a time period specifies how a society categorized people into a particular racial category and refers to how society defined being ‘racist’ and ‘antiracist’ if they did at all. Notably, the term ‘antiracist’ may not have existed in the time periods I am evaluating. However, a lack of terminology does not correlate to a lack of the phenomenon existing. One can identify antiracism as a concept in the past actions of the women I study, even though the term ‘antiracist’ did not exist. Altogether, I will continue to utilize ‘antiracism’ as a term because it allows me to address a concept that existed succinctly yet one could not have named in their vocabulary.

As racial paradigms change, the methods of White fragility change as well. White fragility refers to White people’s actions when confronted with race, either their own or that of others.<sup>2</sup> White fragility often involves a White person (or persons) pointedly redirecting and avoiding encounters of racism and antiracism. Avoidance of these issues functions to maintain racist White power(s).

### **Defining Racism and Antiracism**

My definition of racism comes from author Ijeoma Oluo with further explication from Robin DiAngelo’s definition of prejudice. Oluo defines racism as “prejudice against someone based on race” when systems of power “reinforce those prejudices.”<sup>3</sup> DiAngelo defines prejudice

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<sup>1</sup> Thank you to Professor McLoughlin for discussing this in our Humanities Honors Cohort meeting on October 21, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ijeoma Oluo, *So You Want to Talk About Race* (New York: Seal Press, 2018), 27.

as “pre-judgment about another person based on the social group to which that person belongs.”<sup>4</sup> In application to racism, pre-judgment about other people will be based on their racial group. I selected Oluo’s definition because she acknowledges the powers involved in creating and continuing racial hierarchies. I use DiAngelo’s definition of prejudice because it highlights the process of socialization involved in acquiring racist beliefs. Together, I believe these definitions will capture how the women I analyze operated socially, politically, and economically within the racial power systems.

Kendi’s definitions best suit this thesis in the labels of racist and antiracist. These labels are descriptors of words and actions.<sup>5</sup> Kendi correlates being racist or antiracist to “peelable name tags . . . placed and replaced” as people go about the social world.<sup>6</sup> A word or action is racist if it encourages the inferiority or superiority of one racial group over another.<sup>7</sup> A word or action is antiracist if it encourages the equity of all racial groups.

### **Types of Racism Perpetuated by White People**

The White women I study perpetuate one primary form of racism through racist policies and ideas:

Segregationist: segregationist racism advocates for the separation of people of color from White people, believing the former to be wholly inferior and incapable of assimilating into Whiteness<sup>8</sup>

Segregationist racism is separate from safe spaces for people of color. The former is rooted in racist power and oppression, and the latter is rooted in combating and addressing that oppression.

### **Acknowledging Gender Viewpoints**

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<sup>4</sup> DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), 23.

<sup>6</sup> Kendi, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Kendi, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Kendi, 24.



The gender viewpoints in the United States have adapted over time in order for gender to survive. The gender viewpoint of a time period specifies how a society categorized people into specific gender identities and refers to how a society defined being patriarchal<sup>9</sup> and antipatriarchal.<sup>10</sup> Gender viewpoints will help provide context to how White women are patriarchal and antipatriarchal because gender viewpoints help define women who reinforce established gender roles through their behavior and women who challenge established gender roles through their behavior.

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<sup>9</sup> A term I use from Kendi's book wherein he gives an anecdote about two friends, Yaba and Kaila, who distinguish women who fight for the patriarchy as "patriarchal women", 199.

<sup>10</sup> Both patriarchal and antipatriarchal are terms similar to antiracist in that they may not have existed at the time and yet I will continue to utilize them because of their practicality.

## Chapter II: White Womanhood

### Section I

#### Discussing Whiteness and Womanhood

For the purposes of my thesis, I operate under the conception that racial categories are not inflexible. Charles Mills' constructivist account of race claims race is a socially constructed category arising from historical circumstances and political motivations.<sup>11</sup> I agree with Mills because Whiteness has undergone changes throughout history, evidenced in the exclusion and inclusion of Irish and Italian people<sup>12</sup>, and was founded mainly on political motivations to enslave Black people for monetary gain.<sup>13</sup> Mills' account allows us to understand that from these historical and political circumstances, it is generally appropriate to state that people placed in the White racial category do not face additional obstacles because of the color of their skin. It is integral to note that external perceptions of skin tone play a significant role in racialization that bars a definition of White that fully encompasses all social agents society places in that category.

For the purpose of my thesis, I also operate under the conception that gender categories are socially constructed. Social philosopher Katharine Jenkins recognizes gender as social, and defines a woman as someone with an internal map that tells them they are a woman and guides them through the world as a woman.<sup>14</sup> Jenkins discusses how a subject feeling as though certain gender norms apply to them shapes their actions and goals. As I discuss the gender viewpoints of the four figures analyzed, I will note the relationship these women had with the gender norms of their time, and whether they sought to reinforce or reform those gender norms.

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<sup>11</sup> Charles W. Mills, "But What Are You Really?" in *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 48.

<sup>12</sup> Vilna Bashi Treitler, *The Ethnic Project*, 73, 86, 89.

<sup>13</sup> Treitler, 70.

<sup>14</sup> Katharine Jenkins, "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman," 410.

## **White Womanhood and its Use for Evaluating Racism**

White women perpetuate racism in unique ways because of their racial and gender privileges. As White people, they exist at the top of the racial hierarchy in the United States. As women, they exist towards the bottom of the gender hierarchy that exists in the US.<sup>15</sup> These two facets of identity afford them certain privileges and inform how they perpetuate racism.

For instance, consider the social phenomenon wherein White women make false accusations against men of color. Carolyn Bryant, a White woman, accused Emmett Till, a Black child, of committing an inappropriate action against her.<sup>16</sup> Bryant's accusation against Till resulted in Till's brutal murder at the hands of her husband and his half-brother. Bryant's gender provided the medium through which Bryant invoked the racial power that the murderers used to justify their actions. Anti-miscegenation laws--a form of segregationist racism encouraging the separation of White people and people of color--reinforced the racist power invoked. Bryant made it seem as though Till violated the racial hierarchy and she did so through her gender and race.

## **Section II**

### **Features of White Womanhood through the Lens of Social Justice**

We can further distinguish White womanhood through two features in a social justice lens. They allow for further identification of how White women's relationship to sexism impacts their relationship with racism:

- I. Patriarchal White Women Activists: White women who campaign to strengthen the power of the White patriarchy.

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<sup>15</sup> DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Sources differ in whether Bryant accused Till of flirting or wolf-whistling at her.

- II. Anti-Patriarchal White Women Activists: White women who campaign to weaken the power of the White patriarchy.

In a similar mechanism to racism and antiracism, I argue that challenging or not challenging sexism results in patriarchal and anti-patriarchal persons. To be patriarchal and anti-patriarchal can change from moment to moment and is not a permanent label. When noting patriarchal and anti-patriarchal White women *activists*, I am noting White women whose actions worked toward US society becoming more or less patriarchal. Activists do not necessarily need to impact real change in US society to be activists, it is their *campaigning* that earns them the activist title. Campaigning entails consistent actions towards their desired goal. Regardless of whether they achieve their goal, their persistence towards achieving the goal denotes conviction towards it.

I specifically utilize the term ‘White patriarchy’ as a contextual tool to better analyze the motivations behind why the antipatriarchal White women activists I study perpetuate segregationist racism. As White women such as Stanton and Friedan sought to advance women’s causes, they appealed to the White men in power over the US government to bring about political change. In doing so, it is more fitting to discuss them as opponents of the White patriarchy rather than the patriarchy as a whole. Additionally, the concept of the White patriarchy nuances how these women interacted with their power structures. If we cannot confidently assert them as antipatriarchal, it would seem they need to fall into the patriarchal category. However, intuitively, the work they did weakened the powers of the patriarchy. Thus, contextualizing how they fought against the patriarchy from a racialized standpoint allows me to better analyze how they interacted with White men and people of color. Finally, their use of segregationist racism isolates women of color from benefiting from their activism. Activism that serves mainly to help White women excludes them from being antipatriarchal in a broader sense.

## **Defining Sexism**

I adapted my definition of sexism from author Ijeoma Oluo's definition of racism with further explication from Robin DiAngelo's definition of prejudice. Adapted from Oluo, sexism will be defined as "prejudice against someone based on" gender when systems of power "reinforce those prejudices."<sup>17</sup> DiAngelo defines prejudice as "pre-judgment about another person based on the" gender group "to which that person belongs."<sup>18</sup> I selected Oluo's definition because of her emphasis on the importance of power in systems of oppression. I use DiAngelo's definition of prejudice because she highlights how the socialization of a subject can result in them acquiring sexist beliefs. Together, I believe these definitions capture how the women I analyze operated socially, politically, and economically within gendered systems of power.

## **Patriarchal White Women Activists**

While I argue both patriarchal and antipatriarchal White women activists perpetuate segregationist racism, I argue the reasons behind their racism differ. Patriarchal power in the US is tied with the racial hierarchy that advocates White Supremacy. Thus, I argue that patriarchal White women activists internalize the notions White men propagandize that White women are inferior to White men yet superior to people of color regardless of gender identity. As proponents of the patriarchy, being a proponent of segregationist racism falls in tandem with other beliefs held by patriarchal White women activists.

## **Anti-Patriarchal White Women Activists**

I argue that the anti-patriarchal White women activists I study are more likely to perpetuate segregationist racism because, initially, their socialization into the racism embedded in US society leads them not to recognize their racist beliefs. Both patriarchal and antipatriarchal

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<sup>17</sup> Ijeoma Oluo, *So You Want to Talk About Race* (New York: Seal Press, 2018), 27.

<sup>18</sup> Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 19.

White women activists socialize into a patriarchal and racist society. When White women confront the patriarchy, they unlearn the sexist notions White men taught them to believe. When confronted with their segregationist racist beliefs, anti-patriarchal White women activists tend to either work towards segregationist racism or antiracism. The power dynamics of the society that the White women lived in influenced their decision to make racist or antiracist statements. For instance, when the fifteenth amendment passed, Stanton saw the potential of the power dynamics in US society to shift in favor of men of color over White women. Thus, she utilized segregationist racism to appeal to a White racial alliance across gender differences.

## Chapter III: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Catharine Beecher

### Section I

#### The Racial Viewpoints of Stanton and Beecher

Both Stanton and Beecher resided and primarily operated in the North on the East Coast. Thus, my analysis of racialization reflects the specifics of their situation. During the late nineteenth century, society racialized people mainly on perception. People fell into racial categories based more so on the appearance of their skin tone rather than ancestry. The “one drop” rules of racialization had not yet been implemented and arose with the cluster of racist laws of Jim Crow. Of course, ancestry played a role in the appearance of skin tone, so many people racialized as White had European ancestry. Notably, there existed an ethnic hierarchy within European ancestry and, by proxy, Whiteness. People with shared ethnicities whom society racialized as non-White would seek to secure a racial status as White.<sup>19</sup> Dr. Vilna Bashi Treitler refers to the process of securing White status through different means as an ethnic project.<sup>20</sup> At this time, the Irish, Italians, and other White ethnic immigrants occupied the bottom of the White ethnic hierarchy and faced some forms of discrimination.<sup>21</sup> They had succeeded in their ethnic projects and obtained the status of White. At the same time, they faced ethnic discrimination. Irish people had rather cemented their place in Whiteness, yet still faced classist discrimination because of their working-class status.<sup>22</sup> Italian people had a more insecure position in Whiteness because of their working-class status and amicable relationship with Black people.<sup>23</sup> Irish people had also had an amicable relationship with the Black community and part of their ethnic project

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<sup>19</sup> Vilna Bashi Treitler, *The Ethnic Project*, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Treitler, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Treitler, 73, 89.

<sup>22</sup> Treitler, 74.

<sup>23</sup> Treitler, 89.

was severing those ties.<sup>24</sup> Anti-Blackness played a large role in determining an ethnic group's racial status. Nevertheless, Italian people still operated at the top of the overall racial hierarchy and held more privilege than those racialized as people of color. US society racialized Jewish people at this time as non-White and racialization as Jewish occurred based on perceived differences.<sup>25</sup>

Non-Black people of color forced US society to nuance their previously largely dichotomous racial hierarchy. Non-Black people of color operated in a middling space below Whiteness and above Blackness.<sup>26</sup> Note that the Native American population in the North on the East Coast was so small after the US's genocide of Native American populations that US society created the dichotomous racial hierarchy ignoring the presence of Native peoples.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the relationship between Native American tribes and Black people resulted in White US society refusing to recognize Native American presence<sup>28</sup> and racializing Native Americans as Black.<sup>29</sup> Black people operated at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.<sup>30</sup> Anti-Blackness was a largely held sentiment in US society because US society created a false dichotomy between Whiteness and Blackness in order to justify the human trafficking of Black people.<sup>31</sup> The time period of Stanton and Beecher that I will evaluate takes place after the Civil War and the false dichotomy between Whiteness and Blackness still operated pervasively in US society. As a result of the time period, a lot of racial dialogue centers on the superiority of White people and the inferiority of Black people.

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<sup>24</sup> Treitler, 71.

<sup>25</sup> Treitler, 93.

<sup>26</sup> Treitler, 71.

<sup>27</sup> Treitler, 70.

<sup>28</sup> Treitler, 113.

<sup>29</sup> Treitler, 112.

<sup>30</sup> Treitler, 70.

<sup>31</sup> Treitler, 70.



The two women I will be addressing in this time period fit into the tops of the racial hierarchy. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, whom I study as an antipatriarchal activist because of her suffrage work, fits at the top of the overall hierarchy because of her appearance as White and her known European ancestry. She fit at the top of the ethnic White hierarchy in her time period as she was Dutch.<sup>32</sup> Catharine Beecher, whom I study as a patriarchal activist because of her antisuffrage work, also fits at the top of the overall hierarchy because of her appearance as White and her parent's racialization as White.<sup>33</sup> The racializations of her parents passed down to her. Thus, both women occupied the top tiers of the racial hierarchy of their time period.

At the time these women operated, racism and antiracism manifested most potently through abolition.<sup>34</sup> People practiced antiracist activism through advocating for abolition, and people practiced racist activism through advocating for slavery. The questions of which rights the elite White men in power of the US government would grant the formerly enslaved people led to a nuancing of what seemed a binary between abolitionism and slavery. Freedpeople and a significant number of abolitionists advocated for the suffrage rights and general citizenry rights for freedpeople. Implicitly, freedwomen had limits on their rights because of their gender and race. Antiracism advocated for the rights that brought freedpeople to the citizenry, and racism advocated for withholding those rights. White fragility at this time can be seen in the suffrage movement as many White women responded to the extension of suffrage to freedmen and, broadly, men of color in racist ways. At the acknowledgment of the rights of men of a different racial group, White women suffragists responded by claiming the importance of creating White political solidarity through their suffrage.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009), 16.

<sup>33</sup> Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 74.

<sup>34</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 116.

<sup>35</sup> Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights*, 58.

## **The Gender Viewpoints of Stanton and Beecher**

Gender in the time of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Catharine Beecher followed the binary based on perceived biological differences.<sup>36</sup> Men and women largely correlated to the biological categories of being a cisgender male and cisgender female. Transgender and nonbinary people lived and held valid experiences; however, society did not recognize their gender identities widely. They existed outside of the gender norms and therefore were extremely at risk for harm from social and political enforcement of gender power dynamics. The lack of addressing these other identities made it such that society viewed women as the inferior gender.

Stanton and Beecher fit into this hierarchy as cisgender women; thus they occupied the bottom of the gender binary. Their status as cisgender women placed them at the top of the subsets of the binary, as opposed to transgender women or someone who identified outside the binary.

A rather defined binary appears between patriarchal and antipatriarchal White women activists at this time through the suffrage movement. White women advocating for women not to have suffrage were patriarchal activists. They ultimately believed women's place in society was different from men's because of their sex, and suffrage threatened White women's virtuous status above politics.<sup>37</sup> White women advocating for women's suffrage were antipatriarchal. Although White women suffragists would utilize sexism to garner support for the vote, the presence of White women in politics through suffrage when previously they lacked that access stands in contrast to the patriarchy.

## **Section II**

### **Suffragist Views of Race**

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<sup>36</sup> Newman, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Newman, 71.

Dialogue around suffrage centered on White women. While activists often referred to their work as women's suffrage, the racial landscape at the time meant that the work predominantly assisted in achieving White women's suffrage.<sup>38</sup> White men considered politics and their (male) citizenry as methods of protecting White women.<sup>39</sup> When the elite White men running the US government afforded men of color—specifically freed Black men—suffrage, they obtained a de facto position of protection over White women.<sup>40</sup> White women perceived universal male suffrage as men of color having power over them as White women, which incited White fragility. With the inclusion of men of another race, White women felt White men racially betrayed them. Their specific response came through racialized tactics to encourage support for White women's suffrage. White women worked on switching positions with men of color and taking up the mantle as White protectors of non-White people.<sup>41</sup> Gender came into play as they held this protection as a feminine duty. They cast their ascension to fuller citizenry as a position that allowed them to assimilate men of color and immigrants into White US society.

White women suffragists realized they occupied the disadvantaged status as women but the privileged status as White. They utilized their racial powers to overcome their disadvantaged gender position and gain political power. They argued that the White men in power should grant them suffrage to form a racial alliance against the new influence of men of color.<sup>42</sup> At the first sense of power dynamics favoring men of color over themselves, White suffragists began to campaign to regain power and ascend to a position of power over men of color. In doing so, they reinforced a racial and gender dynamic that intersected. Their subversion of the patriarchy in gaining suffrage came at the expense of fortifying White supremacy in US politics. Their

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<sup>38</sup> Newman, 57.

<sup>39</sup> Newman, 56.

<sup>40</sup> Newman, 57.

<sup>41</sup> Newman, 57.

<sup>42</sup> Newman, 57.

socialization into White supremacy in US society led to their feeling entitled to a status above men of color; when that became threatened, they utilized racism to assert dominance.

Additionally, their subversion of the patriarchy did not benefit all women equally. Women of color, who faced both patriarchy and White supremacy, had to deal with being excluded from a movement that could have benefited them. White women often ignored the issue of suffrage rights for women of color.<sup>43</sup> White women suffragists would compare their situation to that of the previously enslaved Black men, neglecting entirely the experiences of previously enslaved Black women.<sup>44</sup> White women suffragists claimed they shared oppressive experiences with Black men at the hands of White men, completely neglecting their own race and the existence of Black women.

White women's successful use of their racial power to advocate for their suffrage was detrimental in the long term as White supremacy in the US government continuously threatened the suffrage of people of color. By refusing to become intersectional in their activism, the suffrage movement became a White women's movement. Whiteness became the implicit. Oftentimes when reading about the suffrage movement, there is an implicit Whiteness to the movement<sup>45</sup> that goes unacknowledged because White suffragists utilized their racial powers so fully that race no longer needed to be invoked in order to understand who the movement was benefitting. White women suffragists navigated the gender and racial power dynamics of the time to carve out a place for themselves above people of color.

By dividing the feminist movement into an often implicit battle of Whiteness versus people of color, they established a norm for future feminist movements to come emphasize

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<sup>43</sup> Newman, 60-61.

<sup>44</sup> Newman, 60.

<sup>45</sup> Newman, 57.

White women's voices over those of color.<sup>46</sup> Importantly, in the case of the suffragist movement, the racism invoked was done so consciously and intentionally to gain an immediate reclamation of power. Later feminist movements reckon with that decision as media systems often spotlight White women's voices over women of color, reinforcing Whiteness as the default. White women fought to gain power over people of color and establish themselves as more powerful than them, a fight that the White men ruling the US government sanctioned and reinforced when (White) women's suffrage was granted.

### **Suffragist Views of Gender**

Gender roles dictated White women operated within the household.<sup>47</sup> US society upheld White women as morally virtuous and part of that moral virtue lied in the fact that they did not operate with power outside the home in the political world. These conceptions about White women applied specifically to upper and middle class White women as working-class White women did not operate within the household. These White women exerted their moral influence in the home. Their influence came through their social relation to men as their wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers. As conceptions of domesticity broadened, these women became more operative outside the home.<sup>48</sup> Broadened concepts of domesticity did not correlate to a direct increase in political power. White women led and had a presence in charitable institutions and women-specific organizations.<sup>49</sup> Their indirect increase in political power came via their consolidated presence in the social world taking up causes to spread moral virtue outside the household. White women suffragists eventually argued that their suffrage would allow them to bring about moral virtue in politics.

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<sup>46</sup> Newman, 61.

<sup>47</sup> Newman, 56.

<sup>48</sup> Newman, 57.

<sup>49</sup> Newman, 57.

White suffragists needed to balance the maintenance of their unique sphere of influence marked by their sexual difference to men and their desire for increased political power. They had to convince the elite White men in power to grant them suffrage and that doing so would not be the downfall of US society, and, more broadly, White civilization.<sup>50</sup> White suffragists worked towards suffrage asserting they did not want to end sexual difference. They actually used the gender binary to convince the ruling White men of the need for women's suffrage by stating that (White) men could not adequately understand and address the needs of (White) women.

White women realized they operated from a disadvantage as women in the power structure of the gender binary in the US. Arguments for their franchisement on gender grounds had to adhere to patriarchal conceptions of their role. White women suffragists were bargaining with their patriarchal oppressors so that those oppressors would grant them increased political rights. White women suffragists could not advocate for suffrage on the ground of breaking down gender roles as the elite White men in control of the US government would not accept that motivation. The White men in control would not pass (White) women's suffrage if suffrage in any way connotated a loss of their patriarchal power. Hence, White suffragists portrayed (White) women's suffrage as (White) women having a voice to address their unique needs that (White) men could not because of sexual difference.<sup>51</sup> Through this reasoning, White women suffragists reinforced the difference between their genders. As (White) men, they could not fully understand the situations of (White) women. Considering the gender binary operates on the power belonging to those who are not-women, posing (White) women's suffrage as something needed precisely because (White) men were different from (White) women did not threaten the patriarchal system, but reinforced it. Additionally, White women suffragists construed their suffrage as a gain of

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<sup>50</sup> Newman, 58.

<sup>51</sup> Newman, 58.

power for the White men in charge because of their shared racial identity.<sup>52</sup> White women suffragists began campaigning that they would vote as their White men counterparts voted, which granted greater racial power to the White men in charge of the US government.<sup>53</sup> Thus, White women suffragists had to operate from an oppressed status and convince the White men in power in the US government that their suffrage would not impact patriarchal power, and they did so through portraying White women's suffrage as reinforcing their gendered power and as an increase in racial power as a consolidated White vote.

### **The Work of Elizabeth Cady Stanton**

I will now transition into discussing two passages from the work of Stanton and fitting that work into the larger context of the suffrage movement.

- a. "Some tell us that this is not the time for woman to make the demand; that this is the negro's hour. No, my friends . . . This is the Nation's hour. This is the hour to settle what are the rights of a citizen of the Republic."<sup>54</sup> - Brooklyn, NY, February 19, 1867

Given in 1867, in this speech we see the principle behind which Stanton grounds her activism. Her statement contains both implicitly racist as well as explicitly antiracist components. In separating the social groups of "women" and "Black", she implicitly casts women's rights as White women's rights as her statement ignores the presence of Black women who operate both as women and as Black people. Disregarding Black women indicates a pre-judgment about them as a racial and gender group as somehow not worth recognizing and inferior: this satisfies the definition of prejudice previously laid out. The US government reinforced this prejudice through its intentional lack of mention of women of color, which therefore satisfies this ignorance as

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<sup>52</sup> Newman, 57.

<sup>53</sup> Newman, 58.

<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Reconstruction," in *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: Against an Aristocracy of Sex, 1866 to 1873*, ed. Ann D. Gordon, vol. II, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 25-41.

racism: a system of power supporting prejudice. Her ignorance towards Black women remains largely throughout her suffragist activism with her acknowledgment coming only when directly asked about freed Black women and oftentimes then invoking racism.

Notably, Stanton refuses that Black people's rights should take precedence over women's rights, favoring instead the granting of suffrage rights for both groups. This aspect of the statement is both antiracist and antipatriarchal. The statement is antiracist because she advocates for equity among racial groups in supporting Black suffrage. This belief falls in tandem with her other antiracist beliefs as an abolitionist.<sup>55</sup> The statement is antipatriarchal in the context of the White patriarchy because she advocates for equity across the gender binary in supporting White women's suffrage. One may argue this encompasses Black women; therefore, her previous overlook is not racist, but her previous statement insinuates the mutually exclusivity of White women or Black men and therefore prohibits me from endorsing this viewpoint.

Thus, Stanton's early work for the suffrage movement balanced both racism and antiracism as well as patriarchal and antipatriarchal activism. Her overall belief can be summarized as desiring universal suffrage rights for adult citizens of the US regardless of race or gender. She did not want to wait for Black suffrage to pass then for women's suffrage to pass when she felt the elite White men running the US government had the power to pass both under the same amendment.

- b. "American women of wealth, education, virtue, and refinement, if you do not wish the lower orders of Chineses, Africans, . . . and Irish, with their low ideas of womanhood, to make laws for you and your daughter . . . awake to the danger of your present position and demand that woman, too, shall be represented in the government!"<sup>56</sup> - **May 20 1869**

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<sup>55</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 45.

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Address to the National Woman's Suffrage Convention," *Selected Papers*, 241-242.



Many White women who identified as both suffragists and abolitionists agreed with Stanton's overall belief in universal suffrage. The fifteenth amendment led to a divide in the suffrage movement. Where many of White women suffragists supported the fifteenth amendment, Stanton did not. The White women suffragists, including Stanton, knew of the violence against freedmen occurring in the South. White women suffragists recognized the urgency of the fifteenth amendment and that the White men in power were willing to recognize the rights of men of color partially because of their shared sex.<sup>57</sup> Black women could not vote with the passage of the fifteenth amendment because, although they fell under the status of being Black, their gender precluded their suffrage. When the elite White men in charge of the US government passed universal male suffrage before women's suffrage, many White women suffragists understood the power dynamics involved in that decision and allied with freedmen as they continued to rally support for women's suffrage.<sup>58</sup> Thus, many White women suffragists agreed with Stanton's principle and advocated for passing universal suffrage, even if that meant progress coming about one amendment at a time.

This statement, made a month before the passage of the fifteenth amendment but while the activism for its passage was still high, depicts Stanton's turn towards racism as justification for White women's suffrage. In listing the attributes of the women she called upon, she implicitly invokes racist ideas pertaining to women of color to exclude them from whom she calls upon. US society painted women of color as not having wealth or education or being virtuous or refined because of their previous enslaved status and the sexual violence they faced at the hands of the White men who trafficked them.<sup>59</sup> Stanton's use of these attributes is racist because she

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<sup>57</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 125.

<sup>58</sup> I place White in parentheses because if the government passed women's suffrage without mention of race, women of color would not have been able to vote.

<sup>59</sup> Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights*, 61.

invokes pre-judgements about women of color as inferior to White women—who presumably do possess the qualities she lists—and US society reinforced that prejudice through its laws and social rules. Her statement qualifies as segregationist racism as she casts women of color as separate from White women and incapable of the refinement she believes White women possess.

Stanton is much more explicit about her racism towards men of color, whom she invokes to utilize her racial power. She refers to men of color as being of “lower order.”<sup>60</sup> Again she evidences pre-judgement about men of color as a racial group and even invokes the imagery of men of color as dangerous, which has a charged history when considering she is specifically speaking to White women. The US reinforced her statements in their laws and social rules, which makes her statements racist. Again her statement counts as segregationist racism as she constructs men of color as wholly separate and inferior to White women and incapable of ascending to White ideas of womanhood. Stanton tries to invoke the imagery of men of color as lower to overcome the power dynamics that kept the elite White men in charge of the US government from granting White women suffrage. Since arguments to overcome the gender power dynamics did not work and the fifteenth amendment gained traction, Stanton turned to utilizing her racial power to argue for White women’s suffrage.

Stanton’s statements count as antipatriarchal in the context of the White patriarchy. She advocates for White women representation in the US government when previously there was none. The presence of that representation is markedly distinct from an all White male body politic, and advances White women towards gender equality. She pushes back against the gender norm that White women are unsuited to voting. Importantly, Stanton does not criticize the elite White men who are withholding White women’s suffrage. She focuses the conversation on the

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<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Address to the National Woman’s Suffrage Convention,” *Selected Papers*, 241-242.

distinct needs of White women suffrage to protect themselves from men of color. Within the context of the White patriarchy, her focus on men of color seems strategic. To gain equality for women of her race, she focuses on disparaging men of another race. If she were to criticize White men, it would risk them refusing to extend suffrage rights to White women. White men had the power not to pass White women's suffrage. To criticize men of color posed less of a risk because of their previous disenfranchisement and enslavement.

Thus, Stanton seems to have adopted a mindset that if White women like her could not have suffrage, no other social group should have it. She considered White women first in line in deserving rights. Being a figurehead of the suffragist movement, her turn towards racism marked the feminist movements to come.

### **Long Term Implications of Stanton's Work**

Stanton started out as an abolitionist, an inherently antiracist viewpoint and activism, and ended up consciously choosing to utilize her racial privilege to progress White women's suffrage. She played a significant part in shaping feminist movements to come in the US as predominantly focusing on White women.

Stanton operated in a White Supremacist patriarchal society that had many racist and patriarchal laws inhibiting the freedom of many of the inhabitants of the US. Change to US society came from convincing the elite White men running the US government to pass laws that extended rights, and power, to those without. As a woman, Stanton lacked power. Stanton's beliefs in White women's suffrage placed her outside typical gender norms. In advocating for White women's suffrage, she attempts to create more flexible gender norms that permit White women to engage in politics. Coming from a position without power, inciting support for extending her rights as a woman would require convincing the opposite sex that extending her

rights would not topple US society and erase sexual difference. As a White person, Stanton had power. Coming from a position with power, Stanton could utilize her racial similarity with those in power to incite support for the extension of rights to people of color. Her advocacy largely involved universal suffrage. She did not want men of color to have suffrage unless (White) women had suffrage too. She continued to utilize her racial privilege until the elite White men running the US government granted universal male suffrage before women's suffrage. At that point, Stanton ceased utilizing her racial powers for advocating the extension of rights and began to use them to criticize the government for granting suffrage across racial lines instead of across gender lines. She invoked segregationist racism as a form of manipulation of her racial power to advocate for an increase in her gendered powers.

Her decision to utilize racism to advocate for White women's suffrage had short term payoffs and long term consequences. In the short term, her tactics convinced the US government to extend suffrage rights to (White) women in 1920, albeit after her death. In the long term, her presence as a figurehead of the first feminist wave in the US meant racist activism became intertwined with antipatriarchal activism. Stanton set a precedent for using racialized tactics to advance (White) women's rights. In Stanton's time, she chose to incorporate racism into her antipatriarchal activism. In modern culture, antipatriarchal activism is facing the repercussions of that choice as systemic racism disproportionately focuses on the stories of White women at the expense of women of color. White women now can utilize their racial powers in the way Stanton should have and disentangle racism from antipatriarchal activism.

### **Section III**

#### **Black Women and the Suffrage Movement**

As previously discussed, Black people operated at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, and women operated at the bottom of the gender hierarchy. Black women had a distinct position in the racial and power dynamics of the late 19th century because they operated at the bottom of both the racial and gender hierarchy.

White women could appeal to a common racial identity to convince White male US politicians to grant them suffrage, and Black men could appeal to a common gender identity. Both social groups did so in their campaign for suffrage. Black women did not have this opportunity because they did not share a common racial or gender identity with the elite White men running the US government. Social identities translated into politics as Black women either would not be able to vote because of their race or because of their gender, which means the elite White men running the US government needed to pass a law that prevented withholding suffrage on account of race *and* gender. Black men and White women only needed White male politicians to clear one aspect of their identity in order to acquire suffrage.

White women suffragist's turn towards racism made many Black women face a choice: side with a movement that has openly used racism or side with a patriarchal movement that would not push to extend suffrage to them.<sup>61</sup> This choice was unique to Black women because they navigated operating at the bottom of both the gender and racial power dynamics of the time. Without a consolidated Black women's suffrage space, Black women would face some form of oppression. Some Black women suffrage activists opted for advocating for universal suffrage rather than choosing between backing a movement helpful only to either White women or Black men. In doing so, they openly criticized the racism of White women and the sexism of Black men. Identifying their activism within the terms previously laid out, Black women suffragists often advocated under antipatriarchal and antiracist sentiments. Black women suffragists wanted

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<sup>61</sup> bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3.

universal suffrage in the hopes they could use suffrage to open the door to further educational opportunities for women.<sup>62</sup> They also attempted to bring White women into the anti-lynching movement. Black women wanted to hold White women, especially southern White women, accountable for their complicity to perpetuating racial oppression with White men.<sup>63</sup> These attempts to work with White women suggest Black suffragists had a desire to consolidate a woman political group that held both antipatriarchal and antiracist beliefs. White women rejected this opportunity. White women knew the racial power dynamics of the time gave them a higher likelihood of success in passing women's suffrage if they avoided association with Black women and utilized racism in their campaign tactics.

White women were especially dismissive towards Black women because of the false narrative about Black women's immorality. As previously discussed, White people, especially men, racistly manipulated the sexual violence Black women faced into the false narrative about Black women's depravation.<sup>64</sup> White women perpetuated this notion through their exclusion of Black women in the suffrage movement. White men reconstructed the image of White women to make them seen as virtuous.<sup>65</sup> White women accepted and acted accordingly with this position because it imbued them with an increase in racialized power. Black women faced racial stereotypes from White men that White women were willing to reinforce for the sake of upholding and increasing their racial power. White women would not stand in solidarity with Black women because doing so threatened the virtuous status of White women.<sup>66</sup> White women would not risk losing being seen as 'moral' by associating with an 'immoral' group. The racial

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<sup>62</sup> bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, 168.

<sup>63</sup> hooks, 169.

<sup>64</sup> hooks, 130.

<sup>65</sup> hooks, 31.

<sup>66</sup> hooks, 131.

power dynamics of the time outside the suffrage movement imbued themselves into the suffrage movement to the detriment of Black women.

Black men would not risk losing out on suffrage for themselves to guarantee women's suffrage would pass as well. Sojourner Truth was a renowned Black women suffragist who advocated for both suffrage and Black people's rights. As discussion over the fifteenth amendment rose, Sojourner Truth specifically discussed the patriarchal oppression Black women would face at the hands of Black men if Black women did not possess suffrage.<sup>67</sup> Black women became reliant on Black men to represent the unique racialized and gendered issues they faced. Anna Julia Cooper, another Black women's rights activist, advocated for gender equality so the antiracist movement would benefit from leadership not only by Black men, but by Black women too.<sup>68</sup> Once politicians passed the fifteenth amendment, many Black men advocated for universal women's suffrage. Even with this activism, that did not change the fact that Black women "had no political voice" and Black men held political power over them.<sup>69</sup> The gendered power dynamics of the time played against Black women outside the Black community and imbued themselves into the Black community, again, to the detriment of Black women.

Many White women suffragists severed ties with the antiracist movement as a response to the passage of the fifteenth amendment. Their racist beliefs about Black women led to them focusing on arguing in favor of a consolidated White vote, completely abandoning an opportunity to create a consolidation of women.<sup>70</sup> Black women were the first to bear the brunt of this exclusion because of White women suffragists openly anti-Black sentiments. White women suffragists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, decided to reinforce the racial hierarchy

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<sup>67</sup> hooks, 4.

<sup>68</sup> hooks, 167.

<sup>69</sup> hooks, 3,4.

<sup>70</sup> hooks, 3.

within the feminist movement when they had the opportunity to form a feminist movement beneficial to all women.

The (White) women's suffrage movement set a precedence for Black women not to trust feminist movements in the US. White women could convince the White men in power to grant them rights. The suffrage movement proved White women would not fight to extend those privileges to Black women. White women's use of their suffrage against the extension of the rights of women of color meant even when Black women gained suffrage, their social status could not change because White women refused to consolidate with them. Instead, White women chose to reinforce racial power structures so they could continually engage in a dialogue with White men to afford themselves rights.

#### **Section IV**

##### **Antisuffragist Views of Race**

Antisuffragism was a movement rather exclusively composed of White people.<sup>71</sup> As a result, antisuffragism largely did not address women of color. In their discussion of women's suffrage, the common racial identity between group members and many leaders of the antisuffragist movement meant there was an unspoken racial component that suggested their discussions were really about White women's suffrage. They did not have to nuance their arguments or concern themselves with excluding women of color because their movement did not have a large involvement from women of color, and oftentimes antisuffragism wanted to distinguish White women as superior to women of color. Thus, White women antisuffragists concerted effort to separate people of color because of race qualifies the antisuffragists' actions

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<sup>71</sup> Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights*, 69.



as segregationist racism. Women of color were conceived as being too immoral and incompetent to be worthy of a special moral position in politics.<sup>72</sup>

Antisuffragists knew their shared Whiteness allowed them to garner more favor with the elite White men running the US government. The elite White men in power would prioritize their arguments before people of color and, given the antisuffragists inherent patriarchal views, White women suffragists. Antisuffragists reaffirmed the racial power dynamics of the time to encourage favor with those in power.

### **Antisuffragist Views of Gender**

White women antisuffragists viewed themselves as above politics. They felt suffrage encouraged public disagreements with men and entailed the neglect of domestic duties; therefore, suffrage would be inappropriate for women.<sup>73</sup> Their belief in sexual differences and feminine virtues such as humility and obedience led to their rejection of White women's engagement in politics. The historical favor of politics towards men and by men discouraged their participation in such an establishment as they felt politics threatened those feminine virtues and the demarcation of sexual differences. The desire to prevent (White) women's suffrage and reinforce the gender roles and gendered power dynamics of the time period suggest White women antisuffragists stood firmly on the side of patriarchal activism.

Interestingly, many White women antisuffragists clashed with White men antisuffragists who stated women had an inferior nature and as though the sexual differences between men and women held moral implications.<sup>74</sup> Many White women antisuffragists supported higher education and equal professional opportunities for women. To advocate for these beliefs and

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<sup>72</sup> Newman, 61, 73.

<sup>73</sup> Newman, 69.

<sup>74</sup> Newman, 72.

antisuffragism, they had to participate in politics without contradicting their espoused beliefs in White women's position being outside politics.<sup>75</sup>

### **Beecher's Power**

I will now transition into discussing two passages from the work of Beecher and fitting that work into the larger context of the antisuffragist movement.

- a. "But while woman holds a subordinate relation in society to the other sex, it is not because it was designed that her duties or her influence should be any the less important, or all-pervading. But it was designed that the mode of gaining influence and of exercising power should be altogether different and peculiar."<sup>76</sup>

As previously mentioned, antisuffragists oftentimes did not explicitly mention race because it was unnecessary to do so in their movement. Women of color did not have an active role in antisuffragism and White antisuffragists did not mention them because of their segregationist racist beliefs. Beecher implicitly invokes these beliefs in her use of the word "women" when she really wanted to address White women. Her use of racism is subtle and socialized into the fabric of US society. Her navigation of racial power dynamics comes across as almost subconscious in the implicitness of her language. She appears so socialized into the racial hierarchy that she knows she need not address White women in name to be addressing White women, the word "women" at the time carries the implicit denoting of "White women."

She held both patriarchal and antipatriarchal beliefs that rooted her reasoning in her patriarchal activism. She advocated for White women's education. On the surface, her belief in White women's education was antipatriarchal because patriarchal systems benefited from (White) women's lack of education which prevented (White) women from exercising agency

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<sup>75</sup> Newman, 71.

<sup>76</sup> Catharine E. Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism with Reference to the Duty of American Females*, (Boston: Perkins & Marvin, 1837), Google Books PDF, 99-100.

outside domesticity. Additionally, she felt White women's domestic work was equal to White men's work outside the home. US society would categorize the equality undermining her beliefs as antipatriarchal because many White men in power felt their work was superior to that of White women. Under the surface, she advocated for White women's domestic education. She believed the differences between White men and White women at the time had to do with real differences as opposed to socialized fabrications. She embraced the gender norm that White women should contain their power and agency to their work educating children and running the household. Considering society at large at this time when (White) women's position in society was changing and (White) women left the home for outside social organizations, this belief is patriarchal. She reinforces White women's position as to be contained within the home, which benefited the patriarchy because it prevented White women from exercising agency and gaining their own powers.

Beecher had more of an awareness of gendered power dynamics compared to her seemingly subconscious display of knowledge about racial power dynamics. Where Stanton utilized gender differences to make antipatriarchal arguments, Beecher utilized gender differences to make patriarchal arguments. She likely dealt with internalized sexism that precluded her from recognizing how her activism harmed her and her gender. Her socialization into a White, patriarchal society resulted in her holding racist and patriarchal beliefs that turned into racist and sexist activism. She knew how to navigate gender power dynamics that benefitted the patriarchy because she was socialized into that knowledge.

Altogether, Beecher's early writings followed the same thoughts she displays in the quote above. She wanted White women's education to service White US society and the White men in power. Her belief in the value of White women's work as equal to White men's work sets her as

antipatriarchal, and her overall argument ultimately contributes to patriarchal power. Her writing was specifically for White women, although direct mention of Whiteness did not come up.

- b. “Another danger from universal woman suffrage would result from the course that would be taken by many of the most virtuous and intelligent women. Of those who would regard this measure as an act of injustice and oppression, forcing duties on their sex unsuited to their character and circumstances, many would refuse to assume any such responsibilities. Thus a large number of the most intelligent and conscientious women would be withdrawn from the polls, increasing the relative proportion of the ignorant and incompetent voters, a class that already bring doubt on the success of republican institutions.”<sup>77</sup>

This book was published after the passage of the fifteenth amendment. The White men in power passed universal male suffrage, and universal female suffrage was a dominant political issue. The fifteenth amendment held special value for the Black community because, at the time, hate crimes targeting Black people, especially Black men, became common in the South.<sup>78</sup> The hope behind passing the fifteenth amendment was to consolidate a Black voice in politics as well as provide protection and power to the Black community. Dialogue around suffrage often centered the false dichotomy of Whiteness and Blackness because White people argued that universal suffrage would grant power to their perceived opposite—Black people. The racism within this dialogue was largely inherent because the argument is founded on the racist belief that Black people are inferior to White people because of their race. Importantly, as previously discussed, Black women did not gain suffrage from the fifteenth amendment because of their gender.

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<sup>77</sup> Catharine E. Beecher, *Women Suffrage and Women's Profession* (Hartford: Brown & Gross, 1871), Google Books PDF, 195-196.

<sup>78</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, 125.

Beecher's language specifically separates White women from women of color, specifically Black women, in a codified manner that allows her to prevent direct invocation of race while still perpetuating racism. US society upheld White women as "virtuous and intelligent" and White women—both suffragist and antisuffragist—perpetuated that idea because it benefited them.<sup>79</sup> White women on both sides of the suffrage and antisuffrage movement utilized that conception to their political advantage. US society and wealthy White women conscientiously portrayed White women as possessing virtues that separated them from women of color. White women of lower classes held less virtues than wealthy White women because of their poverty, and more virtues than women of color because of their race.<sup>80</sup> US society conceived of non-Black women of color as largely composed of immigrants, and therefore "ignorant and incompetent" because of their non-naturalized and non-White status.<sup>81</sup> As previously mentioned, US society held Black women as lacking virtue and intelligence because of their previously enslaved status and the sexual violence they faced at the hands of the White men who trafficked them.<sup>82</sup> Beecher, having been socialized into US society, had an awareness of these different racializations. Deconstructing her attributions to different sects of women, her description about "virtuous and intelligent" women translates to a complement about White women, and her description about "ignorant and incompetent" women translates to a racially charged insult about women of color.<sup>83</sup>

After deconstructing her language, the segregationist racism she invokes becomes clear. Her description of women of color as lacking knowledge and competency displays a pre-judgement about them based on their racial group. The US reinforced that prejudice based on

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<sup>79</sup> Catharine E. Beecher, *Women Suffrage*, 195.

<sup>80</sup> Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights*, 63, 69.

<sup>81</sup> Newman, 28, 60.

<sup>82</sup> Newman, 61.

<sup>83</sup> Catharine E. Beecher, *Women Suffrage*, 195.

race, which satisfies the definition of racism I use. Her specific demarcation between White women and women of color as well as her descriptors against women of color suggests she views women of color as unable to be 'fixed', which satisfies the requirements of segregationist racism. Her assessment that the mere existence of women of color in US society incites doubt about the success of the US government as a system further suggests her belief of women of color as wholly separate and inferior to White women.

Beecher utilizes racial power to advocate for her antisuffragist views. Her socialization into White US society grants her an awareness of the power dynamics operating within US society. She knew she would be able to convince the elite White men in power to withhold universal women's suffrage through the invocation of racism. Since the fifteenth amendment prevented withholding the vote on account of race, women's suffrage would translate to universal adult suffrage. Beecher tried to convince the power holders that White women would not practice suffrage and the consolidated White vote that other White women suffragists, such as Stanton, claimed would consolidate a White political power would not happen in actuality. Beecher took that argument and further argued women of color would vote in order to inspire fear into the power holders minds that a consolidated vote for people of color would override the White male vote.

Beecher views suffrage as a burden on White women that goes against their being. There is an irony in the fact she describes suffrage as "injustice and oppression" at the same time she perpetuates injustice and oppression against women of color. Her evaluation that suffrage goes against the nature of White women suggests Beecher subscribes to the idea that White women have a separate and distinct virtue that sets them above the realm of politics.<sup>84</sup> She views women's suffrage as a threat to White women maintaining their virtuous status.

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<sup>84</sup> Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights*, 69.

Beecher's views are patriarchal in nature because her beliefs indicate a pre-judgment about women as not suited to the political realm which suggests a difference between men and women founded on social custom. She embraces and reinforces the idea that it is fundamentally unsuitable to White women's nature to vote. Beecher may have claimed women as above politics, however this idea is not a suitable argument against her having a prejudice against women because she is establishing her belief on a fabricated difference between men and women. Her prejudices are reinforced by the system of power in the US as the power holders did not want to grant women suffrage based on the differences she cites. The power holder oftentimes took this difference as a sign of inferiority, not superiority as Beecher would argue. Thus, Beecher supported a patriarchal system in her antisuffrage activism.

### **Long Term Implications of Beecher's Work**

Beecher became an activist for patriarchal powers in the US because she established the central arguments of the antisuffragist movement and reinforced White women's domestic role in the household. When the peak of antisuffragist fervor occurred in the early years of the 20th century, it was her arguments that threatened the passage of women's suffrage. Her popularity increased the circulation of her ideas about (White) womanhood and the role of women as confined to domesticity. Beecher wanted to reinforce the gender norms that surrounded White women at the time. She hoped to preserve the virtuous status of White women and stop Stanton's goal of shifting gender norms to allow White women access to the ballot box.

Beecher's long term impact resulted in patriarchal movements in the US run by (White) women disparaging women of color. Beecher's long term impact is more nuanced compared to Stanton because Beecher's large platform reinforced a system already in power. Her activism already excluded women of color because of her racist beliefs in White women's virtue and

women of color's lack thereof. She contributed to the precedent that future patriarchal movements could utilize women of color as an example to prevent the procurement of women's rights because *all* women would be granted those rights. Additionally, her activism marks one of the first to claim White women's position and distinction in society should mean they should *not* ascertain equal rights to men. Her work laid the foundation for future patriarchal White women activists to reinforce patriarchy and racism through codified language. Instead of explicitly expressing segregationist racist beliefs, patriarchal White women activists utilized language that possessed different meanings depending on the listener. For the purposes of this paper, on the surface, the statement has a rather innocuous meaning; under the surface, the statement has a *racially charged* message. Oftentimes, this racially charged message fell into the category of segregationist racism. Patriarchal White women activists fought for patriarchy and racism through pointing out that women's rights would advance not only women's rights, but the rights of people of color too, which threatened the power of White men across racial and gender lines.



## Chapter IV: Betty Friedan and Phyllis Schlafly

### Section I

#### The Racial Viewpoints during Second-Wave Feminism

As with the time period of Stanton and Beecher, racialization during second-wave feminism (1960s-1980s) still was largely based on perception. People interacting in the social world fell into racial categories based on the appearance of their skin tone. Of course, ancestry played a role in the appearance of skin tone, so many people racialized as White had European ancestry. When comparing the White ethnic hierarchies from the late 19th century and the mid-20th century, there was significant change. Irish people had been successful in their ethnic projects for some time and were largely able to operate within White society without discrimination.<sup>85</sup> Italian people still operated towards the bottom levels of the White ethnic hierarchy.<sup>86</sup> At the same time they still faced some discrimination within White society, they maintained their privilege of Whiteness. Jewish people were recently successful in their ethnic project and White society racialized them as White.<sup>87</sup> They operated towards the middle and bottom of the hierarchy and did face remnants of anti-Semitism within White society. Jewish people obtained a White racial status through the claim that ethnicity was separate from race. As previously discussed, ethnic projects involved convincing those considered White to expand who they thought of as White. For both the Irish and Italians, part of their ethnic project involved distancing themselves from the Black community.<sup>88</sup> Jewish people did not partake in this tactic as much as they advanced an ethnic versus racial distinction. They claimed ethnicity related to culture and was changeable based on where one was born and race was unchangeable.<sup>89</sup> White

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<sup>85</sup> Vilna Bashi Treitler, *The Ethnic Project*, 76.

<sup>86</sup> Treitler, 91.

<sup>87</sup> Treitler, 98, 99.

<sup>88</sup> Treitler, 71, 90.

<sup>89</sup> Treitler, 96.

people accepted and helped to popularize the ethnicity and race distinction and accepted Jewish people into Whiteness. The popularization of race versus ethnicity can be seen in the 1970 census where ethnic identification began to translate to racialization. The 1970 census classified European ethnic identities as White when individuals marked their race as 'Other'.<sup>90</sup> Altogether, the White ethnic hierarchy changed in that Irish people had mostly finished their ethnic project and Jewish people had recently been successful in theirs. As previously stated, these ethnic groups faced discrimination at the same time they held racial privilege for their Whiteness in a way that people of color did not.

The overall racial hierarchy displayed the nuance that was beginning to come about at the end of the 19th century. Non-Black people of color operated at a middle ground between Whiteness at the top and Blackness at the bottom.<sup>91</sup> US society often did not classify people with multiple racial identities as White.<sup>92</sup> The 1970 census report grouped Mexican people with White people, a classification that the government would change come 1980.<sup>93</sup> The translation of this into society was different from the census classification as White because oftentimes White people discriminated against Mexican people in a method indicative of racializing Mexican people as non-White or as operating at the bottom of the White ethnic hierarchy.<sup>94</sup> Mexican people began to advocate for a non-White status themselves because of the discrimination they faced from White people and the continual growth of their own identity and culture in the US.

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<sup>90</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States," generated by Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, using census.gov, September 2002, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2002/demo/POP-twps0056.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> Vilna Bashi Treitler, *The Ethnic Project*, 97.

<sup>92</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990."

<sup>93</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990."

<sup>94</sup> Vilna Bashi Treitler, *The Ethnic Project*, 128.

Thus, the racial hierarchy was more nuanced in the 1970s compared to the late 19th century at the same time Whiteness remained at the top and Blackness remained at the bottom.

The two women I will evaluate fit into the top of the racial hierarchy. Betty Friedan, who I study as an antipatriarchal activist because of her feminist works, fits towards the middle of the White ethnic hierarchy as she was Jewish.<sup>95</sup> As previously discussed, Jewish people in Friedan's time held a White racialization. Phyllis Schlafly, who I study as a patriarchal activist because of her anti-feminist work, fits towards the middle of the hierarchy as she had Scottish ancestry and her parents were both born in the US.<sup>96</sup> Thus, both women occupied the top tier of the racial hierarchy of their time period and could largely operate in US society without facing racial discrimination.

White people responded to the Civil Rights Movement by establishing a new framework of interpreting racism. Evaluations of antiracism and racism became tied into a good and bad binary.<sup>98</sup> Racism adapted a new definition as intentional and malicious prejudiced actions, such as shouting slurs or physical attack, committed against people of color because of their race. At the time these women operated, people became classified as racist and antiracist based on their position about the Civil Rights Movement. People practiced antiracist activism through support for the movement, and people practiced racist activism through expressed opposition or neutrality to the movement. The new definition of racism meant if one was antiracist or race-neutral, then they were morally good; and if one was racist, then they were morally bad. Defining racism in this way is altogether too strict because being told an action is racist becomes

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<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Whitaker, *A Macat Analysis of The Feminine Mystique*, (London: Routledge, 2017), 9.

<sup>96</sup> *Men of West Virginia*, (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1903), 157.

<sup>97</sup> Carol Felsenthal, "The Surprising Secret to Phyllis Schlafly's Success," *Time*, September 8, 2016, <https://time.com/4483234/phyllis-schlafly-parenting/>.

<sup>98</sup> Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 21.

a criticism of a person's character. White fragility comes into play as, instead of acknowledging the impact of their action, many White people feel the need to defend themselves. Instead of reflecting on their behavior, White people try to justify how they were not racist and, therefore, still morally good. By and large, this framework is still pervasive today. At the same time, authors today are trying to break out of this false dichotomy to a more nuanced definition of racism.<sup>99</sup>

### **The Gender Viewpoints during Second-Wave Feminism**

Gender in the time of Betty Friedan and Phyllis Schlafly still largely followed the binary based on perceived biological differences.<sup>100</sup> Men and women largely correlated to the biological categories of being a cisgender male and cisgender female. Compared to the late-19th century, LGBTQ+ activism in the mid to late 20th century increased the visibility of transgender and queer people. At the same time there was an increased visibility, US society still heavily discriminated against transgender people and those who operated outside the gender binary.

Friedan and Schlafly fit into this hierarchy as cisgender women, thus they occupied the bottom of the gender binary. Their status as cisgender women placed them at the top of the subsets of the binary, as opposed to transgender women or someone who identified outside the binary.

A rather defined binary appears between patriarchal and antipatriarchal White women activists at this time through the second wave feminist movement. White women advocating against the equality of (White) men and (White) women were patriarchal activists. They ultimately believed women should remain housewives and women having access to the same

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<sup>99</sup> See the definition of racism utilized in the introduction which combines the works of Oluo, DiAngelo, and Kendi.

<sup>100</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 5

jobs as men threatened White US society.<sup>101</sup> White women advocating for the equality of (White) men and (White) women were antipatriarchal in relation to the White patriarchy. In advocating for gender equality, White women feminists<sup>102</sup> stood in contrast to the patriarchy that thrived on the inferior status of women.

## Section II

### Second-Wave Feminism and Race

Dialogue in second-wave feminism centered White women. Stanton's use of her racial power to focus the suffrage movement on White women had a legacy. That legacy is apparent in second-wave feminism as the media centered White women.<sup>103</sup> Similar to the suffrage movement, references to second-wave feminism as a women's movement oversimplifies the nuanced racial dynamics of the movement and who the movement benefited the most, which was White women. The racial hierarchy Stanton helped impose in feminist movements in the US meant White women did not need to actively and explicitly utilize their racial powers to advance themselves as a social group. US society would focus attention on their wants and desires over those of women of color.

Similar to the suffrage movement, White women utilized their racial power to overcome their gender disadvantage and gain political attention. It is difficult to speculate whether this initial use of racial power was intentional or if White women's socialization into the feminist racial hierarchy already established by previous feminist leaders such as Stanton meant White women did not recognize their misuse of their racial power.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, whether or not this initial use of racial power was intentional, their ignorance to the needs of women of color

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<sup>101</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 2.

<sup>102</sup> Note that I am not invoking the term White feminists because the term has its own meaning that does not fit what I am describing here.

<sup>103</sup> Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>104</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 2-3.

was racist and the impact of those actions warrant discussion. As White women were exposed to the feminisms of women of color, they faced the choice of whether to start performing antiracist actions or keep performing segregationist racist actions.

White women wanted to enter the workforce and have the same opportunities as White men.<sup>105</sup> Their activism focused on women who were unsatisfied with their positions as housewives.<sup>106</sup> Women who were in that position were almost exclusively White and middle-class.<sup>107</sup> A significant number of women of color and working-class White women were working already, many were working-class.<sup>108</sup> Thus, second-wave feminism was predominantly occupied and done for well-off White women.<sup>109</sup> White women overlooked the work towards equality for women of color. White women's initial use of the racial power dynamics was more tacit than a conscious strategic manipulation of the racial power dynamics. After the Civil Rights Movement, White women living outside the South became socialized into a system that taught them they were not racist because they did not have an open, explicit disdain towards people of color.<sup>110</sup> White women did not have an awareness about the different situations of women of color, which resulted in them unconsciously perpetuating the racial power dynamics of the time. As White women began to interact with women of color within the second-wave movement, their racial knowledge expanded and their racist or antiracist actions became more conscious. Some White women feminists became strategic in performing antiracist actions and others became strategic in performing racist actions. Those who utilized racism did so with the knowledge that racial power dynamics favored White women over people of color because the

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<sup>105</sup> hooks, 1-2.

<sup>106</sup> hooks, 1.

<sup>107</sup> hooks, 1.

<sup>108</sup> hooks, 1.

<sup>109</sup> hooks, 1.

<sup>110</sup> Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 71.

US government was still predominantly run by White men.<sup>111</sup> Racial alliances played a large role in society, especially after the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>112</sup> Thus, White women feminists during the second-wave inherited a racial power dynamic both from US society and the suffragist movement.

### **Second-Wave Feminism and Gender**

Second-wave feminism focused on bringing women to equality or equity with men in the workplace and in personal lives.<sup>113</sup> Central issues included pay equality, abortion, and acknowledgment of housewifery as work, and domestic violence.<sup>114</sup> White women in the sixties were emerging from housewifery as a full-time profession.<sup>115</sup> White women wanted acknowledgment of the value of their housewifery as work equal to White men's.<sup>116</sup> White women in the seventies were more able to move around freely in the workforce. At the same time they had this freedom, they were also facing workplace discrimination and limits in how much they could advance.<sup>117</sup>

White women operated from a disadvantaged standpoint as women in the US during second-wave feminism.<sup>118</sup> Lack of legal protections in the workplace and in their personal lives made women privy to multiple forms of discrimination.<sup>119</sup> In response, White women began to protest the government that was predominantly composed of White men to pass policies that would protect them.<sup>120</sup> Compared to the suffrage movement, White women during the

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<sup>111</sup> Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 67.

<sup>112</sup> Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 49.

<sup>113</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 19.

<sup>114</sup> Koa Beck, *White Feminism*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021), 30, 59.

<sup>115</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 1-2.

<sup>116</sup> Elizabeth Whitaker, *A Macat Analysis of The Feminine Mystique*, 10.

<sup>117</sup> Koa Beck, *White Feminism*, 59.

<sup>118</sup> Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 70.

<sup>119</sup> Koa Beck, *White Feminism*, 59.

<sup>120</sup> Beck, 60.

second-wave were much more direct about their desires for equality. For instance, where in the suffrage movement women discussed not wanting to threaten the distinction between men and women, during the second wave of feminism, women openly advocated for reducing the significance of the distinction.<sup>121</sup> White women knew they were in a lesser position in the gender dynamics of the time, yet they were not afraid to criticize their oppressors and advocate for equality.

### **Betty Friedan's Power**

- a. "The problem lay buried, unspoken for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she . . . shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, . . . chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, [and] lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself—'Is this all?'"<sup>122</sup>

Friedan published this book after noticing the (upper and middle-class White) women from her college were dissatisfied with their lives as housewives.<sup>123</sup> Given her narrow case study, it is not surprising that her book only spoke to a minority of women in the US. The majority of women in the US were working.<sup>124</sup> Within the population of White women, many did not have the luxury of being housewives and were part of the working-class.<sup>125</sup> Aside from the classism involved in the sentiments Friedan expresses, there is an implicit segregationist racism. Friedan begins her book discussing "the minds of American women." She then specifies American women to be suburban wives. This specification excludes virtually all women of color because the significant majority

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<sup>121</sup> Elizabeth Whitaker, *A Macat Analysis of The Feminine Mystique*, 11.

<sup>122</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 57.

<sup>123</sup> Elizabeth Whitaker, *A Macat Analysis of The Feminine Mystique*, 10.

<sup>124</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 96.

<sup>125</sup> hooks, 1.



of women of color were not housewives.<sup>126</sup> The exclusion of women of color falls under segregationist racism because excluding women of color from “American women” implicitly perpetuates the separation of women of color from White women.

Friedan’s statement, in the context of the White patriarchy, is antipatriarchal. Friedan is advocating for White women to enter the workforce and no longer be relegated to housework. Her beliefs went against the gender roles of the time and threatened White men’s power over White women. Entering the workforce meant White women would have economic power and not be so dependent on White men. Therefore, her statements are antipatriarchal in relation to the White patriarchy. Where Stanton did not openly criticize the White men in power for their sexism, Friedan seems more comfortable addressing the fact that White women were dissatisfied with the roles White men ascribed to them.

Friedan’s neglect of women of color depicts her socialization into a White supremacist society. She casts American women as White because those were the women who could become housewives. In doing so, she utilizes the racial power dynamic that favors Whiteness. Friedan’s book critiques a central conception of family that White US society upheld.<sup>127</sup> Whether she was intentional in her centering of Whiteness or not, her Whiteness allows her to make this critique with fewer obstacles because she is at the top of the racial hierarchy.

- b. “Many of these cases [workplace discrimination] were Negro women, who are victims of the double discrimination of race and sex. Until now, too few women’s organizations and official spokesmen have been willing to speak out against these dangers facing women.”<sup>128</sup>

Friedan’s quote satisfies both being an antiracist and antipatriarchal statement.

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<sup>126</sup> hooks, 2.

<sup>127</sup> Koa Beck, *White Feminism*, 30, 172.

<sup>128</sup> Betty Friedan, *It Changed My Life*, 112.

As an antiracist statement, Friedan acknowledges women of color, specifically Black women, and how race and sex can combine to contribute to discrimination. Friedan encourages the equity of all racial groups<sup>129</sup> through acknowledging “the double discrimination” women of color face.<sup>130</sup> In acknowledging that double discrimination, she recognizes that different racial groups are treated differently, therefore they have unique experiences. Highlighting the unique experiences of women of color works towards equity. Therefore, Friedan’s statement satisfies the definition of antiracism.

As an antipatriarchal statement, Friedan’s antiracist statement points to her consideration of women of color. In considering women of color, Friedan describes a feminist movement that benefits women of all races. Therefore, Friedan’s statement marks a turn towards truly antipatriarchal work.

Friedan utilizes her racial privilege within the racial power dynamics of the time to bring attention to women of color. As a White person, Friedan holds racial privilege. Friedan utilizes that privilege in her statement in that she navigates the racial power dynamics that will uplift her voice before women of color. Additionally, as the author of *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan held a leadership position within the second wave feminist movement. She utilizes this position to bring attention to the unique situation of women of color.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 20.

<sup>130</sup> Betty Friedan, *It Changed My Life*, 112.

- c. A press release<sup>131132133134135</sup> which was sent during Shirley Chisholm's campaign for president (around 1972) wherein Friedan was quoted as saying she would host "a traveling watermelon feast" in Harlem.

I am including Friedan's quote to discuss how her actions after working more in the second-wave feminist movement were a mix of racist and antiracist actions. Since this quotation mainly deals with race, I will not be discussing patriarchal and antipatriarchal sentiments.

Friedan's statement satisfies being a segregationist racist statement. The watermelon stereotype began as Black people after the Civil War planted, harvested, and sold watermelon as a livelihood.<sup>136</sup> White people in the US began to create stereotypes about watermelon and Black people as a response to their success.<sup>137</sup> They used the watermelon as a symbol to portray Black people as unclean because the fruit is messy to eat and lazy because it is an easy plant to grow.<sup>138</sup> The stereotype segregates Black people from White people. Invoking this stereotype, Friedan makes a segregationist racist statement.

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<sup>131</sup> Rachel Shteir, "Why We Can't Stop Talking about Betty Friedan," last modified February 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/03/us/betty-friedan-feminism-legacy.html>.

<sup>132</sup> Nora Ephron, *The Most of Nora Ephron*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 62.

<sup>133</sup> Towela M. Munthali, "Pushing the Glass Ceiling: Shirley Chisholm & the Democratic Party," *Women Leading Change: Case Studies on Women, Gender, and Feminism* 3, no. 2 (2018): 23, accessed 20 May 2022, <https://journals.tulane.edu/ncs/article/view/1334>.

<sup>134</sup> Ellen F. Fitzpatrick, *The Highest Glass Ceiling: Woman's Quest for the American Presidency* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 2017), 217.

<sup>135</sup> I have not seen the press release myself, however I found numerous other sources (footnotes 129-132) which have discussed the existence and content of the press release. I have not accessed it, but Box 5 Folder 9 of the Shirley Chisholm Papers in the Special Collections and University Archives at Rutgers University Libraries contains the press releases for Shirley Chisholm's campaign from January 1969-August 1972, which would be the time period in which Friedan made this statement.

<sup>136</sup> William R. Black, "How Watermelons Became Black: Emancipation and the Origins of a Racist Trope," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 1 (2018): 64, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26381503>.

<sup>137</sup> William R. Black, "How Watermelons Became Black," 65.

<sup>138</sup> Black, "How Watermelons Became Black," 66.

Why Friedan decided to invoke this stereotype cannot be said with certainty. The statement shows Friedan still held segregationist beliefs and expressed them. Considering again her position of power in the feminist movement, this statement carries weight on how women of color would perceive for whom the second wave feminist movement would benefit.<sup>139</sup> Friedan's use of the racial power dynamics reintroduces those power dynamics from US society into the feminist movement.

### **Long Term Implications of Friedan's Work**

Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* helped launch second-wave feminism and highlighted what would be central issues within the movement.<sup>140</sup> Friedan hoped to change gender norms that taught women their value lies in being a wife or mother. She wanted women to have work and educational opportunities that allowed them to recognize the value of their personhood outside of their relationship with men. The issue with her work is that it addresses a narrow selection of White women. Casting American women as White women meant her activism worked towards solidifying classist conceptions of White womanhood and segregationist policies within feminism.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, the legacy of *The Feminine Mystique* struggles to encompass women's issues because it focuses on a narrow conception of *White* womanhood.

In her later career, she performs a mix of racist and antiracist actions. Her acknowledgment of how race and sex interact speaks to her development of antiracist ideas. Her use of stereotypes speaks to a lasting belief in some segregationist ideas. Discussing the long term implications of her later work becomes nuanced because of the mix of racist and antiracist actions. Friedan isolated women of color from the second wave feminist movement through her racist writings and speeches. When her work is placed in perspective as helping to launch the

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<sup>139</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 96.

<sup>140</sup> Elizabeth Whitaker, *A Macat Analysis of The Feminine Mystique*, 10.

<sup>141</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 96.

second wave movement, isolating women of color prevented the formation of a single, intersectional feminist movement.<sup>142</sup> Modern feminism still deals with the centering of White women, which Friedan reinforced.

White womanhood was shaped partially by Friedan in that there are connections between her work and the modern discussions of White feminism.<sup>143</sup> Friedan reinforced the system within feminism that uplifts White women's voices above women of color. Silence from White women about women of color continues to exclude women of color from the feminist movement.<sup>144</sup> Friedan's initial constraints about who qualified as an American woman excluded women of color in this way.<sup>145</sup> Friedan's activism wavers between setting the precedent of the exclusionary White feminist movement that is still pervasive today and working towards the inclusive intersectional feminist movement that grows as antiracism spreads.

### Section III

#### Antifeminism and Race

The anti-feminist movement was predominantly composed of White women.<sup>146</sup> The anti-feminist movement shunned people of color<sup>147</sup>, and people of color tended to favor movements that fought oppression.<sup>148</sup> The anti-feminist movement believed in reinforcing gender roles and a system of power that oppressed people of color, therefore people of color were less likely to join.<sup>149</sup> The White women within the anti-feminist movement were socialized into White US society that founded and reinforced their beliefs in White superiority.

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<sup>142</sup> hooks, 5.

<sup>143</sup> Koa Beck, *White Feminism*, 114.

<sup>144</sup> Beck, 26.

<sup>145</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 57.

<sup>146</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?" *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* 5, no.7 (1972), <https://eagleforum.org/publications/psr/feb1972.html>.

<sup>147</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?"

<sup>148</sup> Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 43.

<sup>149</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 96.

The anti-feminist movement benefited from their mostly White makeup as the predominantly White US government would listen to their ideas more readily. Navigating the racial power dynamics of the time would be relatively easy because they operated from a place of power. They did not have to face additional obstacles because of their race. When reinforcing their movement as one that deemed Whiteness as superior, they utilized codified language.<sup>150</sup> Utilizing codified language allowed for these White women to make clear whom their movement was ultimately supporting.

### **Antifeminism and Gender**

The anti-feminist movement cast themselves as a pro-family movement.<sup>151</sup> They felt the feminist movement was a threat to the gender roles that pushed for women remain in the home.<sup>152</sup> The anti-feminist movement supported these gender roles and felt women were supposed to take care of children while the husband worked.<sup>153</sup> They shamed women who needed to work or wanted to work for failing to perform their gendered duties.<sup>154</sup> Altogether, they believed in reinforcing the gender roles that existed and were against the push of the second wave movement for equality.

The anti-feminist movement was mostly made up of women and was still able to garner support from White male politicians because the message of the movement supported the patriarchy. (White) women would remain at home and be dutiful to their husbands who worked and held political, social, and economic power over their wives.<sup>155</sup> The anti-feminist movement

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<sup>150</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?"

<sup>151</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, interview by John Callaway, *WTTW*, Public Broadcasting Service, 1977.

<sup>152</sup> Schlafly, interview by John Callaway, 1977.

<sup>153</sup> Schlafly, interview by John Callaway, 1977.

<sup>154</sup> Schlafly, interview by John Callaway, 1977.

<sup>155</sup> Schlafly, interview by John Callaway, 1977.

was not a threat to the patriarchy, and in fact supported it, therefore they had the support of the gender that held more power.

### **Phyllis Schlafly's Power**

I want to introduce three quotes from Phyllis Schlafly's 1972 self-published article. The first quote lays out the central argument of the article, the second quote is one of her reasons supporting her argument, and the third quote is an explanation of the aforementioned reason.

- a. "Of all the classes of women who ever lived, the American woman is the most privileged."<sup>156</sup>
- b. ". . . American women are a privileged group . . . [because] we are the beneficiaries of a tradition of special respect for women which dates from the Christian Age of Chivalry."<sup>157</sup>
- c. "In other civilizations, such as the African and the American Indian, the men strut around wearing feathers and beads and hunting and fishing . . . , while the women do all the hard, tiresome drudgery including . . . the making of fires, the carrying of water, as well as the cooking, sewing and caring for babies. This is not the American way because we [American women] were lucky enough to inherit the traditions of the Age of Chivalry."<sup>158</sup>

Taking all three quotes together, we see Schlafly endorse both the patriarchy and racist beliefs.

She endorses the patriarchy in all statements. Within the first quote, as women faced countless forms of gender discrimination both in the workplace and in their personal lives,<sup>159</sup> she classifies American women as "the most privileged."<sup>160</sup> Her belief that women are privileged supports the patriarchy because she casts the discrimination women face at the hands of the

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<sup>156</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?"

<sup>157</sup> Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?"

<sup>158</sup> Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?"

<sup>159</sup> Koa Beck, *White Feminism*, 59.

<sup>160</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?"

patriarchy as nonexistent or inconsequential. In the second quote, she endorses the patriarchal concepts of chivalry which she defines in the third quote as having to do with women having special gender roles that keep them in the home.<sup>161</sup> Thus, she embraces the gender norms of the time. In the third quote, after differentiating the American woman as White, she discusses her support for chivalry. Supporting chivalry supports the patriarchy because chivalry as she describes it endorses differences in gender roles on account of sex. This difference of treatment entails women being confined to childcare and gender roles, which supports the patriarchy.

Schlafly endorses racist beliefs in her quotes once the reader recognizes who she considers to be an American woman. In her third quote, she uses a colonialist viewpoint to openly disparage African and Native societies. She casts the societies as inferior in her suggestion that American women are “lucky” to have avoided these practices. Taking the second and third quote together, we can presume American women to be White because of Schlafly’s distinction of American women as beneficiaries of a Christian tradition. Invoking religion, specifically Christianity, serves to segregate the women she is speaking to as the African and Native societies are placed in contrast to Christianity. Placing communities of color in contrast to Whiteness and portraying those communities as inferior satisfies the definition of segregationist racism.<sup>162</sup> Applying the recognition of American women to be White women to the first quote, the reader can see that Schlafly is specifically addressing how American White women are “the most privileged” women to ever live.<sup>163</sup>

Schlafly appeals to both the racial and gender power dynamics of the time to make her arguments. By speaking about and uplifting White women, Schlafly utilizes the racial hierarchy that favors Whiteness. By supporting patriarchal values and affirming gender roles, Schlafly

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<sup>161</sup> Schlafly, “What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?”

<sup>162</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Antiracist*, 24.

<sup>163</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, “What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women?”



utilizes the gender hierarchy that favors men. Schlafly appeals to those in power, White men, through her arguments to garner support for her cause. White men are more willing to support her because she is embracing the gender norms and racial hierarchy that keep those White men in power. Thus, Schlafly not only does not pose a threat, she also becomes an ally to the White men in power. Her gender is a shield against the possibly negative reaction to a (White) man dictating the roles of a (White) woman.

### **Long Term Implications of Schlafly's Work**

Phyllis Schlafly enabled and uplifted the patriarchal White woman. She utilized religion to signify that she was addressing White women and utilized a colonialist viewpoint to insult communities of color.<sup>164</sup> Her work impacted White womanhood in the US in that it helped normalize the current phenomenon of White women's opposition to a movement that is intended to benefit them. Schlafly manipulated the feminist goal to cast feminism as an anti-family movement.<sup>165</sup> Schlafly wanted to buttress the conceptions of White womanhood that promoted dutiful housewifery and motherhood. In Schlafly's eyes, a White woman's value came from her relationship to White men. Schlafly cast any White woman who sought to change that as ungrateful and irrational. She cast these White women as ungrateful through creating a racist, fallacious juxtaposition between the Christian chivalry practices and the cultures of people of color. She cast these White women as irrational through the endorsement of sexist practices that considered women incapable of independence from men. She held constructions about White womanhood similar to those of Catharine Beecher. In their eyes, White womanhood was about being virtuous and defining oneself in relationship to White men. In doing so, she created a lasting impact on White women's relationship to feminism.

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<sup>164</sup> Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?"

<sup>165</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, interview by John Callaway, 1977.

Schlafly skillfully misrepresented the goals of the feminist movement to garner support from other (White) women. She utilized segregationist racist statements to endorse the gender norms of White womanhood. Her use of religion is a common theme seen today in patriarchal White women's rationale for opposing gender equality. Her use of family is another common theme seen today as patriarchal White women oppose gender and racial equality by marking antipatriarchal and antiracist policies as threats to children.<sup>166</sup> Overall, Schlafly helped set up a system that patriarchal White women today utilize to oppose the feminist movement.

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<sup>166</sup> Annie Kelly, "The Housewives of White Supremacy," last modified June 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/01/opinion/sunday/tradwives-women-alt-right.html?searchResultPosition=46>.

## Chapter V: Conclusion

The central argument of this thesis is that the power dynamics of US society motivate White women in patriarchal and antipatriarchal movements to perpetuate segregationist racist ideas. White women within patriarchal and antipatriarchal movements sought to reinforce or reform gender norms, respectively. That they all engaged with segregationist racism to accomplish this goal is noteworthy because it establishes that White women with opposite views towards the White patriarchy have similar attitudes towards people of color. Their common racial background resulted in them forming similar segregationist racist beliefs. That they have the same attitudes indicates the importance of *socialization* into Whiteness. The socialization into Whiteness is critical to watch because it creates tensions within social movements. As future feminist movements arise, unlearning these beliefs is a responsibility White women should take on to create movements beneficial to *all* women.

I began my central argument by analyzing the work of suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton and antisuffragist Catharine Beecher. I documented Elizabeth Cady Stanton's movement from antiracism to racism. Prior to the White men in power over the US government affording men of color suffrage, Stanton makes explicitly antiracist statements that promote equal citizenry for all US citizens. After men of color are afforded suffrage, Stanton turned towards segregationist racism as a tool to promote White women's suffrage. I evaluated Catharine Beecher's coded segregationist racist statements made to support the antisuffragist movement. Beecher utilized racial stereotypes that segregated White women from women of color, specifically Black women, to play into racist fear of a racially equitable society and advocate against suffrage. I then evaluated the works of second-wave feminist Betty Friedan and anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly. Betty Friedan initially perpetuated segregationist racist statements because of her

socialization into a White-centered society. She later makes a mix of racist and antiracist statements, depicting the complexity of the power dynamics of her time period. Phyllis Schlafly utilizes coded segregationist racist statements and explicit segregationist racist statements to support her anti-feminist movement.

Altogether, as we continue to evaluate how White women interact with women's movements, whether patriarchal and antipatriarchal White women continue to utilize the same form of racism will indicate how White women in social movements interact with power structures in the US.

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