

Radical feminism occurred during second wave sociology essay

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**ASSIGN
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Dr. Dean/ Jillian Soyka Women's Studies 2AA3 Radical Feminism: Not For All Mary Wollstonecraft, a women's rights advocator, once said: " I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves" (Kreis 2009). Essentially, Radical Feminists try to achieve a balance of power between men and women (Dean 7 Feb. 2013). Many argue that women are incapable of achieving the same functions as men due to their emotional state and physical incapability's. We may argue that what separates men from women is the inherent ability to reproduce. Shulamith Firestone, a Radical Feminist, argues that women are oppressed due to their reproductive abilities and thus, liberalism can only be achieved by abolishing the ' tyranny' of reproduction (Firestone 65). By studying Conclusion: The Ultimate Revolution by Firestone, I will argue that by denying women's inherit abilities to reproduce and deeming them as a ' tyranny', women automatically are seen as inferior to men which creates a dichotomous meaning for ' Radical Feminism' as it becomes contradictory. If we were to accept Firestone's argument, then it is as though the male is superior and thus, has always been the ' better' being. Furthermore, Feminist Perspectives and Family Research by Greel Fox and Velma Murry and Birth Control and the New Woman by Sadja Goldsmith will highlight how the lack of ' reflexivity' and idea of ' subjectivity' creates a barrier for strong radical feminist thoughts to be influential. Radical feminism occurred during the second wave around the 1960s (Kreis 2009). Radical Feminists at the time had strong theories on how to positively mobilize women (Firestone 66). The theories included a powerful revolutionary movement which had immediate effects. For example, the radical movements brought great attention to mental and

physical violence against women inflicted by men which led to many protests advocating for governmental change, due to this, the " first Rape Crisis and Violence Against Women shelters were started by Radical Feminists" (Dean 7 Feb. 2013). Moreover, this advocated for contraceptives to become more available so that women had control over their reproductive rights (Dean 7 Feb. 2013). Not only did this cause great change but it also motivated other feminist movements to act in a more revolutionizing manner in achieving their goals, such as, anti-war movements and civil rights movements (Dean 7 Feb. 2013). While many argue that there are different ways of going in achieving something, Radical Feminists explain that violence against women is not tolerated. This type of ' we don't care' attitude creates a strong front of women to move towards a more liberalized life: " revolutionary feminism is the only radical program that immediately cracks through to the emotional strata underlying serious politics" (Firestone 65), thus assimilating the female standard with the male. Furthermore, women are given a sort of agency where they reject the stereotypical view of what a woman is by showing great strength in achieving political change, this changing the view of the ' fragile' woman. However, while there are many strengths to radical thought, many weaknesses exist which ultimately play a greater role than the strengths. In order to be successful in achieving change, support is needed. However, because the majority of radical thought challenged hegemonic world views (Dean 7 Feb. 2013), it became extremely difficult to maintain a strong support group, especially because the majority of governmental agencies and constituencies were run by men (Dean 7 Feb. 2013). Furthermore, due to the emphasis on oppression caused by

reproduction, other forms of women's oppression are ignored, such as class, race and sexuality (Dean 7 Feb. 2013). This under-analysis creates an atmosphere where one form of oppression is seen as more important than the other, which forms for a feminist movement to only include some women and exclude the others who are being oppressed for different reasons. Also, the rejection of women's reproductive capabilities highlights the woman as a 'victimized' person, and therefore, forcing others to reject women's abilities as a disadvantage (Dean 7 Feb. 2013). We cannot deny that this instills fear into people as though the female body has been 'cursed' thus making it inferior and more susceptible to violence. Goldsmith argues that radical thinkers describe how, "the assumption has reigned that anatomy determines psychological traits and social role, that being female implies acceptance - indeed enjoyment - of subservience" (Goldsmith 64). By denying female reproduction, the female anatomy becomes a tool to dehumanize and exploit the body creating juxtaposition between the subjective and the objective. Radical Feminism, thus, becomes a theory only available to some women, which defies the whole purpose of feminism: "organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests" (Merriam-Webster 2013). As listed above, we see strengths and weaknesses for Radical Feminism. However, we cannot deny that the weaknesses outweigh the strengths. Firestone has very radical thoughts: "as soon as children are physically able to be independent... it would eliminate the power of psychology, sexual repression, and cultural sublimation" (Firestone 67). Firestone argues that as soon as children are capable of being independent, which can range from any age, eliminates the responsibility the mother has

to the child, thus, abolishing a form of oppression. However, what about women who embrace their motherly roles? By creating such a category of what a woman should do, where do we categorize women who do not agree with achieving liberation in this manner? How can such radical thoughts make sense? Fox and Murry argue that this becomes an issue of 'reflexivity': "a self-conscious reflection about the part one plays in the generation of knowledge" (Fox and Murry 1161). Radical Feminists, particularly Firestone, seem to do the opposite. As a scholar and thinker, in order to come to strong subjective points, the positions and causal relations should be considered. By not reflecting on views, the scholar becomes a mere reporter of what they believe the objective view is, and thus creates their opinion on mere biases (Fox and Murry 1161). How can an individual talk about something that they may not have any idea about? For example, Firestone has concrete thoughts about what the role of a mother should be and how children should lose all ties to their mother after achieving independence (Firestone 68). Conversely, not experiencing motherhood herself (Fox 2012), she denies the notion of 'reflexivity' and becomes a reporter, reporting on radical thoughts which are free from emotional and inherit roles. Furthermore, critic Pelle Billing argues that Radical Feminist thought exploits others while only benefiting some as it eliminates social roles completely (Billing 2009). Billing sarcastically states that, "It's all the fault of the patriarchy, a mythical structure which means that men always get the good deal in life" (Billing 2009). Billing's argument leads to the earlier quote by Wollstonecraft as Billing argues the importance of not categorizing all into one category because by doing so, equity feminism, which is based on the responsibilities women have in bettering

themselves, become harder views to maintain (Billing 2009). Due to the arguments listed above, Radical Feminist thought is neither adaptable nor interchangeable, causing problems for the present and future as issues are constantly evolving. While I believe that sometimes radical movements are needed in accomplishing a goal which will benefit the majority, the concepts behind radical thinkers takes merits away from the theory. From a young age, girls are taught to play with dolls instead of cars, like the color pink instead of the color blue and sit with their legs closed instead of spread a part. Moving into adulthood, women become secretaries instead of pilots and nurses instead of landscapers. Goldsmith argues that this process causes inferiority as, " they [women] fear success and achievement; they have been trained to believe that in order to be attractive to men they must be yielding admiring and lesser in stature" (Goldsmith 64). Therefore, Goldsmith argues that radical thinkers believe, " self-assertion in women reproduces anxiety because it is contrary to the internalized role and because it destroys their self-image of being sexually desirable" (Goldsmith 64), thus roles must be completely reversed or eliminated. However, by assuming that all of this is caused by man instead of perhaps, insecurities imposed by radical thought due to the ability to reproduce, the woman subconsciously has anger towards the man. While this seems understandable in situations where there are conflicting power struggles, it makes the fight towards women's liberation much more difficult and personal (Goldsmith 64). To conclude, Radical Feminists have been able to achieve great movements. However, these movements are very short term and are beneficial during a certain time. We live in a society now where we have advanced scientifically and

intellectually. Our means for protesting for change is drastically different compared to those of the 1960s. Furthermore, due to all the different contraceptives which exist, the majority of women in Canada seem to have a choice over having a child. If we were to apply Firestone's thought on the tyranny of reproduction to today's society, it would be a disaster. As Billing, Fox, Murry and Goldsmith argue, this lack of 'reflexivity' within Radical Feminist as Firestone says "production and reproduction of the species would both be, simultaneously, reorganized in a non-repressive way" (Firestone 68), creates barriers in allowing the movement to become influential. This shift from 'objectivity' to 'subjectivity' must become a realistic factor for scholars in order to impact the lives of multiple people.