

Is Feminism Failing Women?

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For centuries women have been seen as socially and economically inferior to their husbands, and to all men alike. For example, in Greek mythology, Pandora, opened the forbidden box and brought plagues and unhappiness to mankind. Early Roman law described women as children, forever inferior to men. (Compton, 1994) However, in recent decades a new mindset has come to light, the mindset of feminism.

Feminism is defined by Oxford Language as “the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes.” (Feminism, 2021) Woman is defined by Oxford Language as “an adult female human being” (Woman, 2021) In this paper I will be defining women as anybody who identifies as female. Women have been able to make a change in society by helping women become a more prominent part in society, like in 1920, women gained the right to vote.

Feminism has become a hot topic in recent years as well with things such as Women’s’ Marchs, Abortion, and Equal Pay. However, in this paper I will be discussing the mindset of feminism rather than the feminist movement.

In this paper I will be discussing if feminism is failing women in three different societal levels, Self, Citizen, and Career. This paper will discuss if the mindset of feminism is truly helping or failing in the different levels of society. With self being, at home or on an individual spectrum. Citizen being based on laws and government. And finally, Career being based on the workplace and education.

Self

The starting line for this discussion is self. Self is the mindset that women should have equal rights and be equal to men truly shining through on a personal level, hence the idea of a mindset.

Feminism is failing women in Self because Covid-19 has set women back 20-30 years. However, there is a difference of opinion that feminism has not failed women in Self because young women today seem so much more confident, aspiring and sexually adventurous than we had been when we came of age in the 1960s.

In 2020 a new virus became well known for making people extremely sick and caused people to have to quarantine and isolate in their homes. This virus is called Covid-19. From March 2020 to currently in 2022, many countries have been shut down from this pandemic. Due to the shut down and isolation, schools closed, businesses shut down, and people were being forced to stay in their homes. “Four times as many women as men dropped out of the labor force in September, roughly 865,000 women compared with 216,000 men.” (Kashen, 2020). This provides validation that the Covid-19 would have a severe impact on women, progressing them back almost a century.

Kim Brooks has an emotional tie to the rights of women, being as she is a woman herself and that she writes opinion pieces on feminism and the rights of women. (Brooks, 2021) This shows that while it may give her a better insight to how women truly feel when it comes to feminism it also can show bias in her writing. Brooks is the author of the National Public Radio’s, “which is broad range of high-quality news and cultural programming to hundreds of local public radio stations” (National Public Radio, 2021), Best Book of the Year award. This exemplifies that Brooks is a nationally recognized author and that her books and opinion pieces have credibility. Kim Brooks has written over 18 opinion articles on the rights of women and feminism for the New York Times. (New York Times, 2021) Not only does this show that she is well versed in writing different pieces, but she also writes for an accredited source. The New York Times tends to lean more towards the left which promotes feminist ideals more so than the right. This proves

that the New York Times may promote more feminist opinion pieces than another news source.

We can make a judgment that Kim Brooks is a credible source to talk about feminism because of her award-winning writing and the new outlets she chooses to write for.

Isolating women from larger social communities has historically been a surefire way to disempower them, and Covid-19 has imposed one of the longest periods in modern history of prolonged, social isolation. (Brooks, 2020)

This quote exemplifies that Covid-19 was an unintentional way of disempowering women. By not making the men stay at home with the children as well as the wives, we are pushing back into that anti-feminist mindset of the 50s and 60s. When calculating the importance of feminism in the 21st century it is valuable to see that it has taken steps back that we did not believe that it would before.

During the pandemic, many companies claimed that women “chose” to leave their jobs and not return to work, although that is not truly the case because there was no childcare during the lockdowns. Women were seen as the backup system for childcare. (Brooks, 2021) This information exemplifies the sheer impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on women; women were stereotyped by companies and their jobs by making it seem like they chose to stay home rather than having no choice. When gauging the importance of the statistics given by the author, one can see the impact of the sheer numbers in showing the number of women affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the regression of feminine ideals.

Some claim that the Covid-19 pandemic may undo decades worth of progressiveness towards the feminist mindset. Some also claim that an entire generation of working mothers will never be able to recover what they lost because of the pandemic, and companies and people to automatically assume they should be the ones to stay home. This often makes you question how meaningful was the progress made if it can be undone so quickly. Women continue to be placed

on the backburners during this catastrophic event, the mental health and impact of having to leave work had on women personally. The feminist mindset should have allowed for women to be able to stay in their jobs, however we can see that this is not the case.

A study done by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics data talked about that many Black, Latinx, and Indigenous women are the forefront of essential workers, they also make up most of the statistics for single mothers and being more likely to lose their jobs. (Kashen, 2020) However, these women are unable to leave their jobs because without them they cannot pay for their children's childcare, but because of childcare closing due to the pandemic these women must make a choice, and many of them often chose to leave their jobs and rely on the government to pay them for this inconvenience. But women should not have had to choose they should have been able to do both because of how feminism has “progressed” but as you can see once again this is not the case. This information exemplifies that progress can regress as quickly as it advances even in the case of feminine ideals which have been around for 200 years. A judgement can be made that the impact of feminism in the 21st century is regressing back to the 20th century ideals therefore taking away the length of the time and effort extracted to fight for these ideals.

However, feminism has not failed women in Self because young women today seem so much more confident, aspiring and sexually adventurous than we had been when we came of age in the 1960s.

Although crackerjack Lynne Segal has written several articles, she is a freelance writer not earning a degree in journalism. This demonstrates that although Segal does know what she is speaking about she is not an accreted writer and normally writes more studies. However, she currently teaches Psychology and Gender Studies at Birbeck University, which is one of the

world's leading research universities. Segal was also appointed Anniversary Professor of the University of Psychosocial Studies in 1999. She earned a PhD in Psychology from the University of Sydney in 1969. (Verson Books, 2021) This information exemplifies that Segal has a well-rounded education in her field and chooses to look at feminism from a psychological standpoint rather than a feminist standpoint like many other authors and experts making her a unique perspective to view feminism from. We can make a judgment that because of Segal's unique perspective and her years of teaching and learning experience in the areas of Gender Studies and Psychology, she is a valid source to give an opinion on feminism.

The survey, which identifies young women almost solely as victims of recent cultural shifts, was commissioned by and designed to influence government policy. And coming up to an election, it is currently being deployed in Labour's strategies for dealing with the situation of women. The very existence of the report says much about the legacy and continued impact of those forty years of Women's Liberation – its huge achievements, its inevitable disappointments, the seemingly inevitable dilution or simplification of its more diverse and sophisticated perspectives when served up anew in different times and contexts. (Segal, 2022)

This information exemplifies that the legacy feminist women have created for women now is currently being used how they wanted it to, to the fullest extent and women are able to be comfortable in their own skin without it being negative. The universal understanding of feminism taken from the study was more impactful than the data itself.

However, reading through the report it is as though the last forty years of feminist and other scholarly contention around the body, sexuality and representation had simply never happened. There is no awareness here that what became known, especially in the USA, as the 'sex wars' generated some of the fiercest controversies ever seen among feminists. (Segal, 2022)

This quote exemplifies that feminism has progressed more than we believe it to. With women being able to represent themselves sexually and be more open when discussing and showing off in that manner has showed the progression of the feminist mindset. We can make an evaluation

that women with a feminist mindset that their bodies should be equal to men and that if men can show off and be proud of, women should be able to as well.

Public awareness of the routine occurrence of men's violence against women and children, at home and abroad, and consideration of how to expose, discuss and attempt to eradicate it, were entirely inspired by second-wave feminism. (Segal, 2022)

This quote exemplifies that the exploitation of violence to women coming to light is one of the most important things that feminism has accomplished and that it is happening today is more progressive than regressive. When gauging the importance of the exploitation of women, one can see the impact of the feminists fighting for women's rights come to light and women are now being heard.

We can draw a conclusion that although feminism may not be failing women in the way they express themselves when it comes to their bodies and sexual appeals as well as the way that violence against women is more published and women are finally getting the recognition they deserve for years of violence. However, there is the defense that feminism is failing women because of regression. Covid-19 should not have allowed feminism to regress as far back and quickly as it did. Almost 1 million women should not have had to quit their jobs or be paid less when they came back because they "chose" to leave their jobs, the feminist mindset should have allowed these women to be able to stay in their jobs and have their husbands stay with their children or allowed them to come back with equal pay.

Citizen

Another important perspective when gauging if feminism is failing women is on the citizen level. Government and laws are extremely important and valuable to women, if feminism is truly working women should feel represented and know that laws are being passed in their best interest. Feminism is failing women because it is failing millennial women. However, some may

argue that it is not failing women because ethnic women and women alike feel more represented in their government.

Cynthia Reed does not have any degrees in the field of Women's Studies that would benefit her writing about feminism (Reed, 2021). This exemplifies that unlike the other sources while she is educated her lack of education or professional degrees in this area may set back her writing. She earned her Juris Doctor from Georgetown in 2014 (Reed, 2021) and currently serves as an attorney at Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP, which is a world-renowned law firm with locations all over the country and several international locations as well. (Katten, 2021) This information exemplifies, while yes, Reed does not have a degree that relates to feminism, she still has the highest-level degree for her field, this means she could offer a different perspective rather than the other sources who all mostly have degrees and backgrounds of working with feminism and women. In the past she has also worked for several pro-feminist and women organizations in the United States and abroad. This proves that this gives Reed a bit more qualifications because of her work with these organizations, she can see firsthand how feminism is failing. We can make a judgment that while Cynthia Reed does not have a degree in a subject that would give her vast knowledge about women and feminism, because of work outside of her job and her alternate perspective she is a valid source to speak on the topic.

Millennials consist of people born from 1981-1997, they are known as the generation that has failed women the most. Almost 20 years ago Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsberg highlighted the fact that recognizing the fact that men and women are different is the key to making laws that combat gender inequality, she said that "instead of pushing for equality by claiming that women should have the same treatment as men... for women to be treated equally to men, there are circumstances where we must be treated differently." (Reed, 2022) However, when it comes to

making laws, women are still treated as less beings than males, not just in a truly different light. Abortion laws are used to control women and their bodies. Most abortion laws are made by men with little to no input from women. Women also do not feel as represented in Congress as their male counterparts. When women are faced with inequality on a day-to-day basis this is what they receive; “my female peers and I see article after article on Sheryl Sandberg and watch GIFs of Beyoncé dancing that say, “you have the same hours in a day as she does.” (Reed, 2022) This information exemplifies that on a citizen level women face more inequality because they are not treated different in the right way and the feminist mindset does not allow them to get the laws passed that they truly need.

However, some may argue that it is not failing women because ethnic women and women alike feel more represented in their government.

Sarah Sunshine Manning is the Director of Communications at NDN Collective, is a citizen of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes, she has earned her BS from Princeton in American Indian Studies and well as History, and she currently serves as the producer of the NDN Podcast and editor of the NDN blog (Manning, 2021), although she is a freelance writer not writing in their area of expertise. This information exemplifies that although she does not have any true qualifications to write on feminism and it is not her true area of knowledge, she does have the qualifications to write on Native Americans through her vast education and firsthand experience. We can make a judgment that because of Manning’s education and firsthand experiences she is a credible expert to write on this topic.

For Native American women, this is also about asserting their ancestral right to leadership in a society that has overlooked and undermined the power of indigenous women... Native American women held tremendous power in pre-colonial, egalitarian societies across the Americas. Yet because of generations of colonialism, indigenous

women have been made invisible, virtually written out of history and out of leadership by colonial officials. (Manning, 2022)

This quote exemplifies that Native American women are finally being represented in Congress and that the feminist mindset help pre colonization is being reinstated in young girls and adult native minds alike. "...reconnect to the strength of who we once were nations with strong women, with gender equity and with women as valued leaders in the community." (Manning, 2022) This information proves that a strong nation that we once had was during a time where women were able to be represented within the community and gender equality was normalized. We can make a judgment that with the electing of more indigenous women and women alike that feminism is not failing because more women feel represented in the communities they have created in as citizens of America.

We can make a conclusion that although some may argue that feminism is not failing or helping women politically because if it were truly working, we would have more representation and better equal rights acts, feminism is also working on a citizen level because of recent years more and more groups of women feel represented politically and feel as though their voices are heard.

Career

Finally, the last perspective when looking at if feminism is failing women is to look at it from the perspective of the Career field. Looking at how a woman's career and professional life is extremely important when gauging if feminism is helping or hurting them in these fields.

Feminism is failing women when it comes to a professional word because of unequal pay and views of modern, liberal feminists.

Julie Bindel does not have any degrees from any universities. (Bindel, 2021) This shows that unlike most other sources she is not as qualified to speak on certain topics because of her lack of

education. She is the co-founder of a law reform group called Justice for Women. She is also the former assistant director of the Research Center on Violence, Abuse, and Gender Relations at Leeds Metropolitan University. (Bindel, 2021) From this we can see that Bindel is the leader and founder of many women supporting groups showing that she understands that feminism is failing because we have the need for these groups. She has been doing research on this topic for over 20 years and was listed as one of the Most Influential Lesbians in Britain because of her research on the topic. (Bindel, 2021) This information exemplifies the experience and credibility that Julie Bindel has because of her longevity in the field of feminism and women's rights. We can make a judgment that Julie Bindel is a valid source to speak on feminism because she was awarded for her research's impact and has firsthand experience.

Prostitution, or rather "sex work" as the liberal feminists would have it, is a cause and consequence of women's oppression. So long as there are at least a few women describing renting out body parts for men's one-sided sexual pleasure as "empowering" the social structures such as racism, colonialism and misogyny that underpin global prostitution can be set aside. (Bindel, 2022)

This quote exemplifies that many women believe in the feminist ideal that exploiting their bodies for work or as a "job" helps liberate them from men, many women believe that this career is going against the social norms that men have set for women when it comes to jobs and responsibilities. However, the global sex trade while for some women may be liberating for others it can be extremely dangerous and opposite of many feminist ideologies. A judgement can be made that the ideology of liberal feminism when it comes to jobs and working women, actually hinder the feminist ideals and set women back more than progress them forward.

According to the US Census Bureau, women continue to consistently earn less than men. While, yes, more and more women are breaking into higher paying jobs in mostly male dominated fields, women continue to earn 82 cents for every dollar that a male makes. The US Census

Bureau also says that “...women in the United States earned 30% less than men and that pay gap increased with age.” (Dowell, 2022) No matter how much education and progress that women continue to make, they are still looked down upon in the professional world. Even with the Equal Pay Act passed for years, the feminist ideals of equal pay and women being able to work a man’s job are not being shown throughout the country. Women continue to only be represented in lower-paying jobs. (Dowell, 2022) This information exemplifies that feminism is doing little to nothing to help women get ahead in the professional world and is failing at closing the wage gap. When assessing the progress feminism has made to help close the wage gap for women it is apparent to see that little to no progress has been made.

However, feminism has not been unsuccessful because of progress made by second-wave feminists and their impact on women today.

Although Indigo Oliver does not have any specialized degrees in the area of feminism and Women’s rights, she does have a degree in journalism from the New School, which is a private research university in New York City whose mission is to “be dedicated to academic freedom and intellectual inquiry and a home for progressive thinkers.” (New School, 2022) She has been a freelance journalist since 2019 and previously worked as an editorial intern and research assistant. (Oliver, 2022) From this we can see that she has not only the academic background but also the professional experience to understand topics such as feminism and women in the workplace. We can make a judgment that because of her unique background at the New School and being a research assistant, she has the qualifications to do professional and correct research for her articles. Oliver has worked for In These Times, where the article is published, for over two years in multiple positions. This information shows that with the experience and unique

research background that Indigo Oliver has she has the credibility to be writing a researching a topic such as feminism in the workplace.

It was educated, middle-class women who most successfully used feminist ideology and solidarity to advance themselves professionally. Feminism has played a role in working-class women's struggle, too — for example, in the union organizing drives of university clerical workers — but probably its greatest single economic effect was to open up the formerly male-dominated professions to women. Between the '70s and the '90s, the percentage of female students in business, medical and law schools shot up from less than 10% to more than 40%. (Oliver, 2022)

This quote shows that feminism has changed women's ability to secure higher paying jobs and jobs that would be previously known as "male dominated." Without the influence of second wave feminists, women today would be unable to enter the fields that they desire. Women today continue to make strides off these feminists ideal that the women of the 60s and 70s had. By young girls now going to college and earning farther than their bachelor's degrees and majoring in STEM and business they are showing the worth that feminism has on women today and the career aspect of feminism. We can make a judgment that without feminists of the 60s and 70s women today would be unable to make strides in their careers.

While the national agenda in the United States is finally talking about big ideas that could especially help poor and working-class women — like universal childcare, Medicare for All, tuition-free college, a housing guarantee, and the Green New Deal... (Oliver, 2022)

This information shows that without feminism the United States would not be taking action to make it easier for women to earn higher degrees, get higher paying jobs, and become a more intricate part of the work force. When calculating the importance of feminism to the women in the work force it is invaluable to see that without feminism many women would still be seen as invaluable to the labor force.

We can make a conclusion that although feminism has helped progress women greatly in the work force with agendas such as universal childcare and tuition-free college, women are still

struggling to earn high-paying jobs, earn equal for the same jobs' men do, and for them to earn jobs that are truly jobs and not just sex work. Women in the work force need to know their worth rather than the worth men believe them to have but feminism is failing in allowing some women to see that.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it would seem that feminism is failing women domestically and globally. While, yes, great progress has been made to help push women to the forefront and get them the equality they deserve, not enough has done to say that feminism is not failing women.

My research has brought a new light into my eyes about progressive feminism. Before I started my research I was at a constant back and forth on if feminism was truly helping or hurting women. After doing research for over six months, my opinion has not changed as much as I thought it would. I always leaned more towards that feminism was failing women. After reading article after article on how women get paid less than men, the Equality Act still is not passed, and the 19th amendment took almost 50 years to pass. Many women also feel that they still need to be liberated and are held back by the gender stereotypes and constraints that being a woman has. Not only does feminism not help women, but it is even worse for women of color. Women of color do not feel the mindset of feminism at all when it comes to work and childcare. When doing my research, I thought that I would find more articles on ethnic women rising above and having the feminist ideal help them, however I found the complete opposite. Women of color have it much worse than white women, however both go through remarkably similar things when it comes to equality. Therefore, it is my conclusion that feminism is failing women on all three societal levels of Self, Citizen, and Career because women are still struggling to gain full equity today.

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