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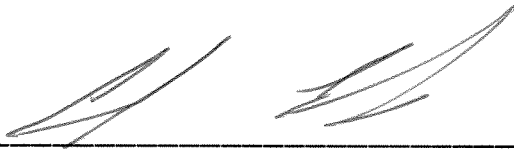
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“Women In the House Y’all”: She Should Run, Post-Feminism, and Women’s Representation in Politics

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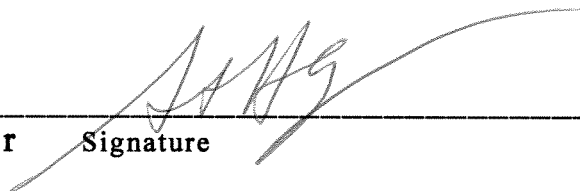


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“Women In the House Y’all”: She Should Run, Post-Feminism, and Women’s Representation in Politics

Amy Gooch

This project investigates “She Should Run”, a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the number of women in public leadership by attempting to eliminate barriers to success. The project argues “She Should Run” addresses the lack of women’s representation in government, but does so by mobilizing problematic essentialist rhetoric and post-feminist constructions. Drawing on second wave feminist scholarship, this rhetorical analysis examines the cultural conditions that mediate women’s role in politics as well as their willingness to participate. The project claims that the organization ultimately reestablishes existing essentialist notions of women’s identities and uses post-feminist rhetoric to delegitimize the aims of the feminist movement.

Keywords

Post-Feminism, Gender Essentialism, She Should Run, Women in Politics

She Should Run

In 2011, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Women’s Campaign Fund, Siobhan Bennett, established She Should Run, a non-profit organization located in Washington, D.C., advocating for the recruitment of female candidates. The organization’s website serves as a platform for mobilizing volunteers, collecting donations and nominating women to run for public office. She Should Run is “dedicated to dramatically increasing the number of women in public leadership by eliminating and overcoming barriers to success,” and assures that the women candidates they support will be given “the encouragement, connections, and resources she needs” (“She Should Run In Action”, sheshouldrun.org). The organization also hosts fundraisers and panel discussions to converse about current issues, and possible future strives towards the overarching mission. As an extension of The Women’s Campaign Fund¹, She Should Run acts as a program to “produce original research relevant to women in politics,” with a Board of Directors with backgrounds varying from philanthropy, financial advising, political directing, and venture capital (“About Us”, sheshouldrun.org).

In addition to providing tools that formally allow individuals to nominate women to enter public life, She Should Run hosts events to bring supporters, nominees, and other like-minded organizations together. She Should Run, Running Start², and The American

¹ Women’s Campaign Fund is a non-partisan national network dedicated to achieving parity for women in public office, founded in 1974. Their mission is working to advance women leaders and political participation with an emphasis in reproductive health.

² “Running Start is a nonprofit organization that brings young women to politics so that they are knowledgeable about the process, invested in the outcome, and interested in participating as elected leaders.” runningstartonline.org

Association of University Women³ have worked together to organize panels like “Elect Her Alumnae: Learn How to Turn Your Student Government Experience Into A Political Career” and “Why So Few? Women In Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.” Projects include research such as “Vote With Your Purse,” which examines trends in women’s political giving, financial power and women’s political fundraising results in election years. The research in “Unlocking The Cabinet,” analyzes women’s status in state cabinets nationwide, identifies trends in women’s appointments, and provides specific advice on tapping women’s talent for these seats (sheshouldrun.org/research). In collaboration with Political Parity and Women’s Media Center, She Should Run also operates a supplementary webpage called “Name It. Change It.” to call out sexist and misogynistic coverage of women in the media environment (nameitchangeit.org).

The site’s layout is in customary red, white, and blue, with the picket sign-shaped logo in the upper left hand corner. The page on She Should Run that visitors use to nominate female candidates is quite cursory: it asks for the name of the candidate, the state she currently resides in, and requires the nominator to complete a prompt that asks “In your own words, tell us why she should run for office?” Each research project has its own page, with a brief summary and an analysis of their findings, as well as complete versions available to download. To accompany their research, She Should Run includes info graphics with headings such as “Damsels in Distress?,” “Show Me the Money,” and “Women in the House, Y’all!”

³ “The American Association of University Women (AAUW) empowers women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research.” www.aauw.org

The United States ranks ninety-first in political representation of women, who make up eighteen percent of Congress and twelve percent of the assembly of Heads of State. Throughout the 1970s, women occupied no major elective positions in U.S. political institutions. Ella Grasso, a democrat from Connecticut, and Dixie Lee Ray, a Democrat from Washington, served as the only two women elected governor in the decade. In 1978, Kansas Republican Nancy Kassebaum became the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate, and in 1979 women comprised fewer than five percent of the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and only ten percent of state legislative positions. When the 112th Congress convened in January 2011, 84 percent of its members were men, and the gender disparity is not only present in the federal level, but in state and local governments. The 2010 Congressional Elections resulted in the first decrease in the percentage of women serving in the U.S. House of Representatives since the 1978 midterm elections (Lawless).

This project will examine the rhetoric She Should Run utilizes to support their mission. She Should Run is an organization seeking a future in which women are represented fairly and wholly in the milieu of political power. In this respect, as part of attaining their mission, She Should Run engages in the ideological framework of post-feminism, which reasserts and maintains the notion that the relations of power between the sexes have been equalized. By emphasizing gender difference and establishing a pronounced distance from the aims of second wave feminism, She Should Run advocates for women's progress on an unstable basis. This project asks to what degree can this organization provide radical feminist policy change and argues that through the associations She Should Run establishes through their web presence and the rhetoric

produced subsequent to these associations, operates to narrow the scope of women's influence and the aims of the second wave in the contemporary political milieu.

Women In Politics: Gender Essentialism and Performativity

In 1987, while running for Congress in the state of Colorado, Pat Schroeder was asked repeatedly why she was “running as a woman”, and in a noxious response she stated, “Do I have a choice?” (Traister 70). Was the reporter asking why she was choosing to run her campaign without suppressing her femininity or were they asking why she was running for office at all? Insofar as female candidates can control or exercise a choice in presenting herself as “traditionally female,” the decision is often to turn up masculine traits and hamper feminine ones, because to be “traditionally female” is not seen as traditionally powerful. By questioning Schroeder's ability to “run as a woman”, the reporter seems to suggest that the characteristics that women possess are not within the scope of attributes that constituents would assign to an effective leader. It also reflects culture's antiquated, essentialist notions of gender.

The rhetoric utilized by *She Should Run* works to reinscribe conventional oppressive gender hierarchies through essentialist notions of female subjects, where essence and characteristics are assumed, inherent, and homogenized in all women. In *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Wendy Brown accounts for derivatives of essentialist thought:

All such determinations, whether derived from feminist readings of history, biology, philosophy, anthropology, or psychoanalysis, have foundered on the shoals of fictional essentialism, false universals and untenable unities. In addition

to these theoretical interrogations, political challenges to feminisms that are white, heterosexual, and middle class by women who are otherwise have made strikingly clear that ‘woman’ is a dangerous and depoliticizing metonymy: no individual woman harbors the variety of modes of subjection, power, desire, danger, and resourcefulness experiences by women living inside particular skins, classes, epochs, and cultures. (166)

Brown’s deconstruction of essentialism is immediate in calling out the assumptions stemming from feminist theory, which have been historically derived from the position of white, heterosexual, middle class subjects. Brown argues, “while gender identities may be diverse, fluid, and ultimately impossible to generalize, particular modes of gender power may be named and traced with some precision at a relatively general level” (166). Brown is implying that although there are a myriad of lived experiences and subjectivities that cannot be wholly realized in relationship to structures of power, those structures of power can be recognized as oppressive. Forms of essentialism point out that in our contemporary moment and within the feminist movement, the notion of “we” that has been constructed is still based upon an existing social hierarchy that cannot be easily dismantled.

In the political sphere, where decision-making and public presence have been over-determined by simply being a woman, a critique of essentialist notions of women’s character and how these work to inscribe women in unequal and subordinate power relations—by the State and other spheres—is imperative in understanding the ways in which they have the ability to shape the lives of female subjects.

The enactment of gendered characteristics, where masculinity is the gauge of power and decisiveness and femininity is reflected upon as meek or uncertain, often determines the perceived power and efficacy of female candidates. In “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”, Judith Butler deconstructs linguistic signifiers and the repetitious “performance” of gender, which serve to naturalize ideas of gender or sexuality as an essence within all human beings:

There is no volitional subject behind the mime who decides, as it were, which gender it will be today. On the contrary, the very possibility of becoming a viable subject requires that a certain gender mime be already underway... In this sense, gender is not a performance that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express. (232)

Butler’s explanation of “volitional subjects” reveals the illusion of deliberate self-identity, and the perceived essence of the individual, which is in fact formed through compulsory performance. Normalized ideas of gender suggest that the “essence” of our gender is inherent, something that feels natural, but the normalizing ideas are determined through existing social norms and structures. Butler argues that “coherent gender,” one that is logical, identifiable, and consistent with socially constructed identity categories, is formed through the repetition of actions that constitute, in this case, “woman” as a natural category. Female candidates running for public office are expected to perform “coherent gender” and prescribe to characteristics that are seen as feminine. Gender essentialism ensures that the status quo is unquestioned, even in relationship to female politicians, which seems to inherently question historically white male dominated institutions.

When women display characteristics that are firmly grounded in the culturally constructed traits of men, a particular counter move takes place in which conventional gender roles are reaffirmed. Whether this move is performed by the media or by the candidate herself, this act takes place in order to reconcile an excess of masculinity that may have been performed.

In 2008 during a Q&A session with voters in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a sixty-four year old woman asked Hillary Clinton, “As a woman, I know it’s hard to get out of the house and get ready. My question is very personal. How do you do it? How do you keep upbeat and so wonderful? And who does your hair?” Clinton responded, “Luckily on special days, I do have help...If you look on some of the websites and listen to some of the commentators they always find me on days that I didn’t have help. It’s not easy. And I couldn’t do it if I just didn’t passionately believe it was the right thing to do.” Then her voice broke slightly as she responded, “I just don’t want to see us fall backwards. You know, this is very personal for me. It’s not just political. It’s not just public. I see what’s happening, and we have to reverse it. And some people think elections are a game. They think it’s like ‘who’s up’ or ‘who’s down’. It’s about our country, it’s about our kids’ futures, it’s really about all of us together” (Traister 92).

Leading up to this particular occasion, political pundits and news writers noted that Hillary’s responses in public forums, although thorough and informed, often lacked emotional resonance when compared to her opponent. Aware of her communicative restrictions, Clinton told George Packer of the New Yorker, “I think that the world is only beginning to recognize that women should be permitted the same range of leadership styles that we permit men” (91). After committing to a campaign strategy that

very consciously understood the merits and limitations of performing masculinity, the moment in Portsmouth was the first in which Clinton's aura of impermeability fell away. In the aftermath of Portsmouth, the media was able to associate her gender performance as feminine. For Hillary Clinton, the quandary of female ambition and power comes to light in this way: when she's down, her ratings are up and when she's up, her ratings go down. In order to win, she needs to be liked and in order to be liked she has to mitigate her success. The production of a normative, unquestioning, and passive Hillary received the most positive attention (her approval ratings were highest during her husband's impeachment) and the aspiring politician (her approval ratings were lowest when she announced an interest in running for the U.S. Senate) reconcile each other multiple times over, reinforcing the brand of femininity that constituents revere.

This event of gender reification did not positively affect her campaign. When Hillary performed masculinity, she was perceived as heartless, a bitch, and a woman that both men and women had difficulty connecting with. When she performed femininity, she was ridiculed for keeping up her tough façade. The reinforcement placed her back into the traditional categories of femininity; she was a woman trying to make a place for herself and other women in a sphere that has been long dominated by men acting in the interest of men. Clinton was going to be cast in an unfavorable light, no matter what her actions. The essentializing discourse of society is reflected upon female politicians, who are judged based on their performance of prescribed gender essence.

Challenging the use of fixed characteristics, or deploying an anti-essentialist framework, opens up, rather than limits, the possibilities of change and thus a social reorganization. The proposition supported in feminism that there is no "essential" female

nature has served to undermine generalizations, but it has also scared women with a feminist commitment to break down status hierarchies away from making political claims on the behalf of a group called “women” (Modelski, 21). This project is concerned with the way in which these strategies and their inevitable backlash interfere with feminist aims and policy changes that provide an opportunity for gender parity in politics, where the female candidates advocate for the rights of women.

Post-Feminism

Support within and around the feminist movement has been reshaped in accordance to media’s representation of its participants, and its apparent successes and failures. According to popular media around 1990, the United States had entered a post-feminist era, in which support for the objectives of the feminist movement had waned or become obsolete.

In Elaine J. Hall and Marnie Salupo Rodriguez’s essay, “The Myth of Post-Feminism,” the authors describe a dangerous ideology permeating within a culture that desperately needs new modes of feminist action and thought. Through the act of naming this trend, an erosion of the diverse landscape of political perspectives derived from women and for women has taken place. The way in which *She Should Run* supports their mission through the use of a post-feminist framework and the implications of how perpetuating these ideas, greatly limits the potential for their candidates to build upon women’s equality.

In “The Myth of Postfeminism,” the authors explain: “although the notion of a postfeminist era permeates popular media, a comprehensive definition does not exist: ‘Despite it’s wide-ranging currency on dust jackets, on late night talk-shows and in

“serious” feature articles, “post-feminism” has rarely been defined” (878). Within their content analysis, Hall and Rodriguez point to four claims of the post-feminism argument:

- (1) Support for the women’s movement has decreased over the 1980-90 period.
- (2) Antifeminism has increased amongst “pockets” of young women, women of color, and full-time homemakers.
- (3) Feminism has lost support because it has become irrelevant. For women who were feminists when younger, the movement failed to achieve gender equality; for young women in the current era, the success of the movement means it is no longer needed.
- (4) A “no but...” version of feminism has developed, in which women are “reluctant to define themselves with the feminist label, but they approve of and indeed demand equal pay, economic independence, sexual freedom, and reproductive choices. (878)

According to Hall and Rodriguez, postfeminism is a “media-created social category” which achieved its reality through language (879). The myth of post-feminism is deployed as a way to move past and brush over the exclusion and flaws within the organization of the women’s movement without first understanding where those flaws created limitations. Rather than a “media-created social category,” post-feminism has become a very tangible and lived ideology. The claims that Hall and Rodriguez introduce for the post-feminist argument points to the lack of inclusivity in the women’s movement, where young women, women of color, and those within other racial-minority groups were not wholly represented. Postfeminism would claim that the failure to mobilize these “pockets” has caused these groups to increase in size and in the strength of their attitudes. The “pockets” of the population that the authors refer to are in fact large populations of women whose subject positions and differing subsequent needs were not addressed with the same urgency as the white, middle-class subjects that were involved in the second wave. The third claim of post-feminism is that the feminist movement has become irrelevant to young women and to the current era. Although the movement failed to bring about systematic changes that promoted gender equality, the successes of the

movement have created just enough space for discourse around women's issues that feminism seems no longer needed. And the fourth is the "no but..." stipulation that post-feminism argues has created a distance from radical feminists, for women who still endorse and sympathized with feminist objectives, but have difficulty identifying themselves as feminist. This claim seems to stem from negative representations of radical feminists, media-created archetypes that discouraged young women from redefining the meaning of feminism in ways that would privilege the kind of change that is in order in their own contemporary moment. These "no but..." attitudes also come into fruition on the basis of the belief that the feminist movement has eliminated discrimination and therefore individual efforts are the solution to the existing conditions of women's rights. This last claim is perhaps the most revealing in terms of post-feminism's effect; when the discussion of feminism is predicated upon its end or its lack of relevancy, where individualized needs are privileged over a collective voice, the potential for a new women's movement and the impact of future female politicians are thwarted.

"Womonomics"

On the She Should Run "Mission" page, there is a quote from the Washington Post article "Fixing the Economy? It's Women's Work," by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman. The quote denotes a troubling trend in the thoughts towards women in powerful leadership positions: "Gender stereotypes aren't politically correct, but the research broadly finds that testosterone can make men more prone to competition and risk-taking. Women, on the other hand, seem to be wired for collaboration, caution and long-term

results." She Should Run and the emphasis placed on the necessity of gender parity for the "health and future of our country" is grounded on the assumption that a woman is biologically predisposed to govern in a way that is discretely different from a man of the same political persuasion (sheshouldrun.org). Contrasting the efficacy of women and men's leadership with essentialist language that serves to reinforce gendered roles and binaries that have previously mediated, as well as currently dictate, the political races and careers of women, only further creates a separation between women's representation and the gendering of political effectiveness and leadership. Kay and Shipman attempt to turn gendered characteristics on its head, but do so in a way that is equally as essentialist and limiting as the existing outmoded traits. Asserting that women are "wired for collaboration, caution, and long-term results" implies that all women think and act in a similar nature. By outlining characteristics of women and men as inherent, and therefore culturally assigned as admirable or inferior, the larger discourse on women's representation remains fixed on archaic gender roles. By including this quote from Kay and Shipman under the banner of their mission, She Should Run recreates the essentializing discourse in society that is holding women back from the leadership positions it strives to place them in.

Functioning as additional support in the rhetorical analysis of She Should Run, Katty Kay and Claire Shipman's book, *Womenomics: Work Less, Achieve More, Live Better*, provides insights into the feminist purview that She Should Run endorses. Superficially, *Womenomics* presents practical advice for negotiating the workplace, urging women to ponder how they could reshape their careers to reclaim their time without sacrificing status and turning those reflections into life changing actions.

Womenomics demonstrates how women are negotiating politics through capital and that the new post-feminist forms of liberation manifest themselves through consumption. And these forms of power never manifest themselves outside of the naturalized history of gender.

Although *She Should Run* and *Womenomics* act as witnesses to the current shifts in women's power and trends of women's leadership in the workplace as an attempt to lend knowledge and insights to the women working and performing within the contemporary moment, both do so by negotiating the political through capital. Whilst the text fail to specifically and distinctly address the contemporary and historical cycle of the absence of women in politics, the pseudo-feminist language, which is used to construct the category of woman as a certain type of gendered subject, operates as a reductive placeholder for a more radical approach to women's representation.

Kay and Shipman define "Womenomics" as:

1. Power. 2. A movement that will get you the work life you really want. 3. The powerful collision of two simple realities: a majority of women are demanding new rules of engagement at the very moment we're become the hot commodity in today's workplace (xviii).

Kay and Shipman immediately address women's power and agency, specifically in regards to balancing work and leisure. The "new rules of engagement" they connote come from the ways in which women have been confronted with balancing demanding careers as well as caring for their families.

The authors of *Womenomics* want the reader to find their own variant of "Having It All," but only to exercise autonomy in terms of buying power and within a culturally

prescribed understanding of gender. “Having It All” was a phrase coined by Helen Gurley Brown, former U.S. editor of *Cosmopolitan*, derived from her book by the same name, *Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money, Even If You’re Starting With Nothing*. For Brown, “Having It All” is finding fulfillment in relationships, work, and family life, in a culture where women are expected to choose between family or a career. And yet, for women, some form of criticism typically follows making that choice. If a woman chooses to pursue both, can her attention really be divided in a way that will serve each role with fruitful results? If a woman chooses motherhood, it means that her talents and intellect are put on the back burner. Can motherhood alone fulfill her? And if she prioritizes a career over her family, will this lack of investment become a source of strain within her marriage? In an op-ed piece for *The Atlantic*, Ann-Marie Slaughter, the first woman to hold the policy planner position at the State department, explained the reactions she received after leaving :

I have not exactly left the ranks of full-time career women: I teach a full course load; write regular print and online columns on foreign policy; give 40 to 50 speeches a year; appear regularly on TV and radio; and am working on a new academic book. But I routinely got reactions from other women my age or older that ranged from disappointed (“It’s such a pity that you had to leave Washington”) to condescending (“I wouldn’t generalize from your experience. I’ve never had to compromise, and my kids turned out great”).

Culturally, women don’t seem to be allowed to feel confident in both professional and domestic spheres, even though neither of them should be comprised of inherently gendered activities. Although *Womenomics* offers advice on how to navigate between the two, it does not question the hidden cultural constructions behind why women’s lives are continually being criticized and regulated based upon the balance of professional and domestic they choose.

The introduction of Womenomics encourages women to capitalize on their newfound profitability, because “employing women is no longer a politically correct palliative to diversity. It is a good business strategy” (3). According to the authors, “We [women] are more likely to encourage participation in meetings, and we tend to be more nurturing of subordinates. We prefer consensus to confrontation and empathy over ego” (7). In the section “Different—In A Good Way”, Kay and Shipman explain that women’s special and distinctly female assets lead to “Pink Profits” and “Pink Profits” lead to “Pink Power.” Tacking the word “pink” to “power” and “profit” to describe the women’s assets and contributions within the workplace marks those contribution as different and supplementary. Setting women’s work apart and labeling it with “pink,” devalues women’s contributions to the workplace. Although this is not the authors’ intention, linking profits contributed by women to their agency, or “Pink Power,” does not create a sense of equality to their male coworkers, but implies a distinctly separate kind of power.

The content of Womenomics and the voices of Kay and Shipman come from a privileged position, distracting the reader from the working conditions outside of the executive strata, while validating the choices of those who are able to negotiate the circumstances of their labor. Many, if not all, of the personal interviews featured in Womenomics feature women in higher up positions within corporations. By keeping the reader focused on themselves and their own self-happiness, an isolating world view that distinguishes and commends upward mobility as a form of self-improvement is revealed throughout the text. One of the many formidable ways in which *She Should Run*’s endorsement of Womenomics operates to proscribe second wave feminism is by

emphasizing the individual over the collective group, isolating women from each other and actively representing the larger hegemonic attempts to destabilize female power and female subjectivities. This idea being one of the criteria of a post-feminist era, She Should Run fully impresses itself into this ideology.

Womenomics utilizes the language of a post-feminist ideology and seems to support many of its claims concerning why feminism is no longer necessary. In the jump between the “end” of the feminist movement and the ideology of post-feminism’s introduction, the issues that inhibited the feminist movement from creating gender equality were not confronted. Instead, the post-feminist space produced a new standard of autonomy that young women and women who do not identify with the feminist movement have used as a placeholder for equal pay, sexual freedom, reproductive choices, and power.

Angela McRobbie explains that in this post-feminist cultural space, female achievement would be predicated not on feminism but on “female individualism,” on the success of the invitation to young women that they might grasp on to the decades-old adage, “You can be anything you want to be,” with little trace of the power struggles engaged or the enduring inequalities between men and women. Womenomics emphasizes women’s consumer power and the “feminizing” of industry as a means of liberation: “We buy stuff, lots of it” (12). McRobbie calls on the “full enfranchisement of women in the west” by virtue of education, earning power, and consumer identity to understand the denunciation of feminist politics, in relation to feminization of popular media and consumption as “undoing feminism” (McRobbie 6). Savvy consumers and sophisticated ladies with manicured fingernails will immediately take note at this

astonishing new development in motor vehicle design: “This isn’t a plug for the car industry, but get this—car designers have even changed the shape of their door handles to accommodate a woman’s long fingernails. Now, when car companies are worried about our nails getting chipped, we know we have power” (13).

Kay and Shipman utilize the rhetoric of personal choice as a way to promote post-feminist ideology, which operates to regulate the means of sociality for women. McRobbie’s argument provides an understanding of how feminist aims are denounced and changed within the façade of a new liberatory ideology for Western women. This allows for purchasing power and the myth of post-feminism to overshadow and replace second wave feminist politics. In this post-feminist space, the agency of women is not increased, but the direction of women’s energies are subverted in different and similarly damaging ways. By celebrating female freedom and gender equality this way, progress in the interest of women’s rights are stagnated and the renewal of a feminist movement is discouraged.

In a section entitled “Confronting the Feminist Ideal,” Kay and Shipman write:

Here’s another rather unexpected piece in the mental challenge—how to handle our debt to our pioneering feminist forebears. It’s a complicated relationship—part gratitude, part admiration, part guilt, [and] part rejection. We know that women thirty years ago fought hard to get all of us a seat at the table. They’ve brought women to the forefront of fields as diverse as business, academics, politics, and journalism. We are all in their debt for taking those early difficult steps and demanding the right and opportunity to take them. The work pace that enabled them to break down those boardroom doors was necessary at the time, but today we have other choices. We both still think of ourselves as feminists, but it’s a new brand of feminism we adhere to. It is a feminism that allows us to build our own work-life model, one that permits us to be who we really want to be (67).

Although it is difficult to determine whether Kay and Shipman believe that their texts occur in the purview of feminism, and in the interest of women after the second wave,

this project begins a deconstruction and questioning of the language of post-feminism and reveal the modes of thought that the authors use to perpetuate reductive notions of feminism and women's progress. The types of women that might engage with *Womenomics* are similar to those who may have participated in the feminist movement, white, middle class, and educated, but the text very effectively discredits feminist scholars that created the foundation for the principles of the feminist movement. Kay and Shipman seem to find feminism irrelevant because of their own achievements in the workplace; "French feminist Simone de Beauvoir could have really used the help of a few brain scans. 'One is not born, but rather becomes a woman,' she valiantly postulated in 1949. She thought she was defending her sex by asserting that our more masculine side was forced out of us by societal forces" (25). But the exhibition of masculinity that women politicians have to perform legitimizes de Beauvoir's argument. Kay and Shipman believe if they have the power to negotiate their lives, in the home and in the workplace, then gender equality is well on its way to being achieved and we should be satisfied with these opportunities.

Womenomics introduces feminist values and the progress of the second wave under the heading of "Confronting the Feminist Ideal," providing a substantial grounding for assumptions that post-feminism engages with concerning the social change constituted by their predecessors. This passage provides a limited explanation of the achievements of the second wave, and even then, the tone imparts a significant desire for difference and separation. Kay and Shipman provide a quick nod to "their pioneering feminist forbearers," but a limited one at that, alluding to the glass ceiling, an unbreakable barrier that has kept women and minorities from rising up the corporate

ladder.⁴ The “new brand of feminism” that Womenomics refers to follows the rationale of post-feminism, the myth of choice, and women’s space to “be who we really want to be.”

The myth of post-feminism that Womenomics and She Should Run asserts threatens to create a reality in which women’s collective struggle is deemed unnecessary. The idea of post-feminism is dangerous because engaging in its construction can be used to counteract the definition of women as an oppressed minority group or to interpret discrimination as idiosyncratic behavior, and to undermine the viability of collective action to improve the status of women (Hall and Rodriguez).

The language and phrases that She Should Run adapts, in their research and in the sources they use to describe themselves, firmly positions their operations within a post-feminism purview. Although their cause is necessary and valuable, its actions and significance are undermined by its approach to framing women’s identity and relationships to feminism. She Should Run addresses the lack of female representation in politics and uses their research to attempt to clarify the reasoning, but does so by passively perpetuating the existing double standard. The rhetoric used in the presentation of their research are unmistakably feminizing and implies the claims of post-feminism are part of the ideology that She Should Run subsists on. On an info graphic slide about political giving, across the top it reads “Damsels in Distress?” A damsel in distress is a young woman in trouble, with the implication that the woman needs to be rescued, as by a prince in a fairytale, or in this case money and support from PACs. The following slide says, “Show Me The Money,” and breaks down the top twenty PACs in the United

⁴ The term “glass ceiling” was coined by former editor of Working Woman magazine, Gay Bryant in 1984.

States. Although there is no doubt that money absolutely helps candidates gain leverage in their campaigns, this slogan implies that money is the key to women's success and not their political acumen, which aligns with Kay and Shipman's notions of feminine agency.

Conclusion

She Should Run excels in tailoring their rhetoric to appeal to the brand of feminism that rejects the radical feminism displayed in the 1960's to instead emphasize women's power in the market and the power of choosing their own lifestyle. In November of 2013, The New Inquiry published its twenty-second volume of the online magazine under the theme "Self-Help." The collection of essays together suggest that rather than adjusting to a world of systemic hostility—by the state, by employers, by individuals—we work on helping each other to change the structures of power that control us.

Womenomics is a sort of self-help book, but instead of addressing the systematic issues that hamper women's success, it frames self-interest as a more productive means for grasping and ordering our current social world. This particular genre of self-help seems to be trending: *Thrive: The Third Metric to Redefining Success and Creating a Life of Well-Being, Wisdom, and Wonder* by Arianna Huffington, *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg and Kay and Shipman's latest *The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance—What Women Should Know*. This trend is troubling because through these texts, women are being told to imitate the poisonous personality quirks they have to tolerate in the work lives, under the appearance of feminist life lessons. And it should seem crass that in the midst of extreme income inequality, these women are asking the

read to emulate and fawn over the tactics and success of the world's rich and powerful. It is also not particularly progressive to inject a bit of feminism, or as this project has argued, post-feminism, into the discussion, in order to distract from our fundamentally flawed and unfair economic system by focusing on gender inequality at the very top.

Perhaps it should convey a great deal that She Should Run would use Kay and Shipman's work as a platform for their mission, because it seems as though they both serve to substitute self-help for politics. Womenomics did not deploy feminist principles or create their emancipatory principles upon feminist scholars and activists who have provided them with the space to live and work the way they choose. She Should Run is committed to providing women with the tools they need to run for office and pointing to sexism in the media, but their outreach is fixed within a digestible scope; "nonpartisan" in this case is really coded to mean nonthreatening. She Should Run does not go out of its way to support candidates who may possess the incitement to remake the current political system and their methods of support seem somewhat provisional, in terms of operating outside of the systematic ways that women are kept outside of participating in politics. She Should Run gives women the tools to become a successful candidate, but does not succeed in teaching and helping those candidates understand that engaging within the larger social landscape for changes that are advocated for by women and will improve women's lives, which should be at the foreground of She Should Run's mission.

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