

**Tia Sorrels**  
**Miss Shively**  
**English III**

### **Feminism in Modern Media**

From a young age, I knew I wanted to be a scientist. I wasn't big on specifics, because what four year old knows the exact job title that they will work towards for their entire minor lives, then work in for their entire adult lives. But, besides the point, I was told by my peers continuously growing up that "scientists are boys, and you're a girl", and I grew older it turned into, "how do you expect to be a mother and work in a STEM field full time". I don't know what the issue with a woman being both a cool scientist and a cool mom, but I do realize that there will be some trials and tribulations doing a both, but in what field is there not trials and tribulations?

I grew up in the days of dial-up connections and AOL Instant Message. My childhood consisted of Reader Rabbit and PBS physics games. Back then, there wasn't much in the way of group forums, and if there were any, I was way too young to figure out how to get there. Social media consisted of email and, if you're really a hot shot, you had an AIM account. The internet had a minuscule effect on how I saw things, I'd really only ever go on to check if my aunt and uncle in Illinois had sent me back a puppy stock photo or an early animated version of an emoji. I could've called them, but this way was so much cooler. I could read what they were saying at a speed that let me comprehend it and process it on my own. It was probably a preface for my ridiculous internet obsession phase of 2006, but at least I was learning to take information on my own in small palatable doses for my young age. The idea that I could learn on my own and at my own pace excited me and kept me online. I feel this is how a lot of people get sucked into the World Wide Web and lead the paths for online forums like reddit, facebook, Twitter, tumblr, etc.. People were being exposed to new information in tolerable ways, leading more people to learn and more opinions to turn extreme. Internet infatuation developed into a real thing, and crept its ways into everyone's lives.

While not everyone has been influenced to delve deep into the abyss of the internet, those who have found communities where they fit in with others like them. This is a great thing, and the morals and ideologies they associate themselves flourish within their online forums. The barricades that keep what was born on the internet there are nonexistent. Ideas go out into real life as easy as they came into fruition. Those ideas can be hateful or helpful, and there's nothing that will stop the ebb and flow of them between our world and cyberspace.

One ideology that has flourished as long as the internet has been around is activism. Whether it be civil rights activism or workers rights activism, the idea of changing the world one march at a time has continued to blossom. A particularly strong activist movement is the feminist movement. Feminism works for the equality of both sexes, and everybody in-between, no matter race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, or gender identity. The difference in how people are treated based off of their sex is still prominently seen in today's society, and true feminism aims to end that discrimination. Feminism aims to end the stigma that you can't be a good mom and still be a cool scientist. Forums upon forums upon chat rooms of people who claim the title

“feminist” discuss with one another their plans and their ideals. So, this leads one to wonder, “where would feminism be without the internet, and how has the web affected feminism ideologies and forms of protest?”

“Feminism is all the rage these days. I know because Hollywood tells me so.”

Is feminism being used as a trend? Open blogs and public social media posts frequently treat feminism as a trend, a fad, something that’s cool for now, but will eventually die out. Celebrities, whether talking about feminism for the attention or for its true purpose, end up creating fads surrounding the Women’s Movement. Have sub-movements, like #metoo and Free the Nipple, commercialized how feminism is viewed by the majority of the population? Everybody wants to jump on board the newest trends, and while it should be treated as a serious matter, celebrities and average joes alike want to claim that they’re all “feminists”. This kind of numbness to the seriousness of the matter separates us further apart from the issue at hand, battling misogyny and creating an equal landscape for all women and men, everywhere. To be intersectional is to address women’s issues head on, no matter what the color of their skin, whether their legs work, or the chromosomes they were born with. Like in the women’s suffrage movement, the main goal was to achieve women’s voting rights for white women. You can try to say that “it was to help ALL women” but think again. 1920 was the year white women were allowed to vote, and the year the high point of the suffrage movement died down. Native Americans could not all vote until 1957, and it was not until 1964 that black women were allowed to vote freely without any sort of test of literacy or special poll tax. Feminism has always been used as a fad for the high and elites, while everyday people, especially those who fall into minorities, still fight the real fights that come along with the true movement. I’m not claiming that no celebrity ever has helped to make strides in the movement, but more have used it as self-endorsement than a real protest. Feminism is about equality of the sexes, no matter what race, no matter what religion. Feminism is unity, but only when practiced correctly and not for direct personal gain. But with celebrities using their platforms, how else does word get around?

Social media, as we know it, has not only changed how we communicate, but it has revolutionized how we receive important news and updates. Let us not be so quick to forget when the state of Hawaii sent out an emergency ballistic missile warning through text message, a false alarm that was debunked by twitter faster than the actual state of Hawaii. We count on our electronic devices to keep us updated with every small detail of our day. The weather? The car picking you up? Where your package is? The coffee you ordered? All at your fingertips. Remember a time when presidents only addressed people through the television on formal occasions? Yeah, funny how things change. Now, a nation is addressed nationally through a platform with a 280-character limit, even a threat of nuclear war was portrayed through an app. No matter who’s button is bigger, social media and smart devices are how we keep ourselves updated and they’ve made major impacts in everything humans do. Prior generations saw the rise of radio, and then television. This new generation is not only seeing, but interacting with new technologies, and integrating them into daily use, meaning other daily tasks, like watching the local weather or reading the paper for stock changes, have become a one stop handheld shop.

With regular usage of technology, comes the great responsibility of keeping real human contact in the world outside our smart devices. You'd be lying if you said you've never seen a funny meme posted around your workspace to raise your morale. These little leaks of the digital world into the physical world really makes you wonder, "what else has leaked into the physical world?" In this lifetime where it is possible for potential employers or partners to do an essential background check on you before even meeting you in real life, where do we draw the line at bringing digital issues into real life issues?

For obvious reasons, opinions are one of the few things that, although widely disputed and argued, find a wholesome community online to nestle down into and feed into a larger picture. They've been there since the dawn of the internet and will be there until someone finally pulls the plug on the World Wide Web. Opinions are as strong as they are everywhere. It's human nature to have strong opinions. Just like the pineapple on pizza debacle, feminism is also a form of opinion. Yes, it may seem like wanting equality for the sexes, regardless of race, economic status, or sexual orientation or identity should be a plain given idea, but it certainly is not. The goal of the ideology is to get everyone to agree and see that people are equal. As ridiculous as it seems to some, it's a real issue for some people to wrap their heads around it. When the online opinions spill out into the real world, they have a sizable impact. Feminism drips out through Facebook events and Instagram live stories. Marches, protests, and hunger strikes can be planned by just a few people in just a few short moments, and reach multitudes of people in less time it took to plan it. From #BlackLivesMatter to White supremacy groups, social media can create a movement and spill out into the real world very easily, bringing with it the love or the hatred that it had online.

Has the easy accessibility brought about more bias? Probably. Has this bias brought about hate? Perhaps. Whenever feminist ideas were brought up around my right wing friends, none of them would give me the time of day. Eventually as more information from the web was flooding their inboxes, due to my persistence to bring them to view equality as a necessity, they eventually gave in, bit by bit, and started discussing with me the issues they found with the feminist movement and the issues that the movement could fix. No activist movement is perfect. Each and every one has those who take it too far or those who use and abuse the movements name. Once you look past how the internet trolls portray the participants of the movement, you can really hit deep into how the movement affects you and those around you. That's what my right wing friends did. Once they got passed the portrayed picture of feminism, with Pussy Power beanies and loud angry screaming over minor issues that have nothing to do with the movement, they started to become more open about certain ideas, that at one point, they would've turned their nose to. And this is all thanks to the internet.

Unfortunately, for every staunch hardhead that gives in to being open minded, there is two more who would rather rant on facebook about how wrong it is that humans want equality. People like this can convince naive minded that equality is bad just as easy as a feminist or a BLM marcher could convince you that equality is necessary. It's just whoever gets to the message board first and who uses the most capital letters to get their point across.

To say that there is a problem with how feminism is portrayed as harmful through social media is just as wrong as it is right. While internet trolls do gather and make feminazi jokes and Woke feminists call out the ones who don't understand the true ideologies in just as harmful

ways, there is also amazing things going on because of feminist forums and groups being so easily accessible. We wouldn't have the women's march in D.C., let alone in more remote cities and towns. We can protest by associating with or not associating with certain platforms, brands, or celebrities, and make an impact by it.

I cannot say for sure if there is truly an issue, or if this is just humans adapting to a new part of life. It may seem as an issue to some but fifty years ago, even just twenty years ago, people didn't have the internet, thus did not have the gains and losses associated with it. Can we say we truly know what's going on with this? No, because there has never been a time where information and resources were so readily available like they are today. This is a problem to look back on twenty years down the road, when we know more about how internet accessibility and information availability affects us and our personalities and our morals. It would be wrong of me to not acknowledge the fact that internet has changed our morals and our personalities. It's made it easier to wallow in ideals we agree with and easier to shut them out. Easier to learn from each other, and easier to teach.

What I can say for sure is, nobody is going to stop me now from being a cool scientist and a mom because of the confidence and self esteem I've gained from a movement that I found somewhere on the web.