

Phyllis Schlafly and the Anti-ERA Movement Through an Evaluation of the Media's Portrayal of Women

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the correlation between anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly and her language in the Equal Rights Amendment (“ERA”) debate and the 1950s media portrayal of women. Schlafly claims anti-feminists were the victims of media representation; she asserts in her December 1979 edition of the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, “not a single magazine published an article against ERA -- or even gave equal space to the arguments pro and con.” While this paper did not research coverage of the ERA debate in the media, I did investigate how preceding media shaped Phyllis Schlafly’s advocacy using an inductive thematic content analysis. In her assertion that the anti-feminists were victims of biased media, Schlafly does not consider how the media *supported* her argument. In this study, I reflected on the media portrayal of women before the ERA debate and the mobilization of Second Wave Feminism by evaluating advertisements in *Life Magazine* and *The Ladies Home Journal*. I hypothesized that the depiction of women in 1950s media directly influenced Schlafly’s advocacy and her view of women’s roles, which aided in the success of her advocacy. This paper discusses how the advertisements laid a foundation to support Schlafly’s claim that women do not want/need constitutional equality with men. The findings of this study indicate the consequences of stereotypical media portrayals and their ability to dictate political and social debates, especially in terms of the repercussions of the depiction of the 1950s housewife.

Historical Context

Anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly effectively curtailed the progress of the ERA by characterizing women as yearning to remain in the domestic sphere. Her advocacy was successful while not aligned with the general population’s opinion about the ERA. In this paper, I will explore the relationship between Schlafly’s work and the precursory depiction of women in 1950s media.

To understand the impact of Schlafly’s work, it is necessary to contextualize the contemporaneous conservative countermovement. In the 1970s, a resurgence of Christian Right mobilization within the American political sphere shocked observers of American politics.¹ This development is often categorized as a reaction to more progressive and secular thought,² including Second Wave Feminism and gay liberation.³ Many scholars primarily conclude Christian Right advocacy and rhetoric stifled deliberation and democratic practices while attracting conservative and “mostly fundamentalist supporters.”⁴ The movement’s use of emotionally charged language and “political amateurishness”⁵

¹Matthew C. Moen, "From Revolution to Evolution: The Changing Nature of the Christian Right," *Sociology of Religion* 55, no. 3 (1994): [Page 349], <https://doi.org/10.2307/3712058>.

²Ted G. Jelen, "Political Esperanto: Rhetorical Resources and Limitations of the Christian Right in the United States," *Sociology of Religion* 66, no. 3 (2005): [Page 310], <https://doi.org/10.2307/4153101>.

³Emily Suzanne Johnson, *This Is Our Message* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), [Page 4].

⁴Moen, "From Revolution," [Page 351].

⁵Moen, "From Revolution," [Page 349].

was heavily based on a Christian view of morality and “family values”⁶ and represented an attempt to preserve the nuclear family structure. The Christian Right’s efforts unlocked a new influential voting bloc concerned with social and moral issues.⁷

Female leaders within the newly-politicized Christian Right constantly had to justify their presence within the movement while remaining cognizant of the gender roles they had to abide by, as they were “constantly being negotiated and defined.”⁸ Beverly LaHaye, Evangelical author and founder of Concerned Women of America, a Christian Right association, asserted that “feminists do not speak for all women.”⁹ Female Christian Right advocates argued that the gender hierarchy was God-given and preached the necessity of maintaining the nuclear family structure.¹⁰ Phyllis Schlafly was arguably one of Christian Right's most prominent female activists. This research will primarily focus on her contributions to the anti-feminist movement, especially her fight against the ERA.

Women’s suffragist Alice Paul wrote the ERA. The amendment was introduced in Congress in 1923 and seriously considered in four later congressional debates.¹¹ The ERA is brief, stating in the first section, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”¹² In the 1970 ERA congressional debate, before the anti-ERA movement, the proposed amendment faced little opposition. In fact, by March 1973, the amendment needed only eight more states for ratification.¹³ Phyllis Schlafly launched her anti-ERA campaign in 1972. Her advocacy within the Christian Right movement engaged anti-feminist women and was instrumental in preventing the ERA’s passage before the 1982 deadline. The ERA has still not been passed.

Literature Review

This research seeks to establish that the media’s portrayal of women in the 1950s impacted the mobilization of anti-ERA supporters. No prior research has connected these events before. However, there is a plethora of research on Phyllis Schlafly, the ERA, and the 1950s media portrayal of women. Therefore, the gap this research seeks to close is the possible correlation between the media’s representation of women in the domestic sphere and anti-ERA political advocacy that worked to keep women in the domestic sphere.

Eric C. Miller of Bloomsburg University approaches Schlafly’s activism using philosopher Isaiah Berlin’s Freedom Perspective theory. Miller argues that Schlafly positioned her movement in a “positive” conception of freedom based on self-mastery and the overcoming of desire” while framing ERA proponents as supporting “a ‘negative’

⁶ Jelen, "Political Esperanto," [Page 313].

⁷ Simon Coleman, "Social Thought and Commentary: An Empire on a Hill? The Christian Right and the Right to Be Christian in America," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2005): [Page 659], <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4150984>.

⁸ Johnson, *This Is Our Message*, [Page 55].

⁹ Johnson, *This Is Our Message*, [Page 1].

¹⁰ Johnson, *This Is Our Message*, [Page 5].

¹¹ Barbara A. Brown et al., "The Equal Rights Amendment: A Constitutional Basis for Equal Rights for Women," *The Yale Law Journal* 80, no. 5 (1971): [Page 886], <https://doi.org/10.2307/795228>.

¹² "The Equal Rights Amendment," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 3/4 (2015): [Page 271], <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43958572>.

¹³ David E. Kyvig, "Historical Misunderstandings and the Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment," *The Public Historian* 18, no. 1 (1996): [Page 45], <https://doi.org/10.2307/3377881>.

conception intent on removing restraints and opening new opportunities for women.”¹⁴ Aligning Berlin’s two definitions of freedom, Miller argues that negative freedom can be defined as “*freedom from*”¹⁵ when positive freedom is “*freedom to*.”¹⁶ According to Miller, in the ERA debate anti-feminists fought for positive freedom, “by which women freely chose the restraints incumbent upon a traditional lifestyle in the hope of developing into a true, authentic type of woman. Patriarchy provided a framework for orderly living, with clear precepts for good womanhood.”¹⁷ The title of Schlafly’s movement STOP (standing for “Stop Taking Our Privileges”) ERA strengthens Berlin’s negative freedom theory.¹⁸ Similarly, Kayla J. Hastrup, in her thesis for her Master of Arts In Communication at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, reviews five of Schlafly’s speeches through Burkean frames of acceptance and rejection¹⁹ to evaluate tactics to uphold the status quo. Hastrup argues that an “understanding of ideological rhetoric and social norms”²⁰ is necessary when discussing Phyllis Schlafly. This notion pertains to my topic of inquiry and is a basis for the connection between Phyllis Schlafly’s rhetoric and the female depiction of women in the 1950s media; furthermore, the study investigates a possible correlation between social norms and the ERA debate.

Hastrup concludes that “Schlafly discourages thoughtful reform, ultimately transcending society away from understanding the full complexities of the social issues.”²¹ Her conclusion supports the broader pattern of the Christian Right movement as explained by Jon A. Shields, author, and professor of American politics. As a result of his analysis of interviews with Christian Right leaders, Shields argues, “there is simply no deliberative education absent the mobilization of moral passions.”²² Implications of these findings in tandem suggest that Schlafly’s work is not well regarded in the scholarly work.

One conclusion amongst scholars is that one of Schlafly’s modes of engagement is fear. For instance, in the *Report, The Effect of ERAs in State Constitutions*, Schlafly claims, “the states that have State ERAs are blazing the trail of the painful effects of applying an absolute standard of equality to the marital and parental relationships.”²³ She attempted to appeal to those comfortable with their lifestyles and roles in the domestic sphere. John T. Jost et al. of New York University cited Glen Daniel Wilson, a prominent psychologist, who argued that “the experience of fear and threat motivates one to ‘cling’ to the status quo and to resist social change.”²⁴ This pattern is proven to be evident in Schlafly’s work.

Both Miller’s and Hastrup’s analysis of Phyllis Schlafly’s advocacy support Shields’ and Jost’s conclusions. While Shields’ and Jost’s arguments did not draw a direct connection to the ERA movement, their work demonstrates the pattern of Christian Right activists villainizing their political opponents by characterizing them as “underhanded,

¹⁴ Eric C. Miller, "Phyllis Schlafly's "Positive" Freedom: Liberty, Liberation, and the Equal Rights Amendment," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2015): [Page 279], <https://doi.org/10.14321/rhetpublaffa.18.2.0277>.

¹⁵ Miller, "Phyllis Schlafly's," [Page 281].

¹⁶ Miller, "Phyllis Schlafly's," [Page 281].

¹⁷ Miller, "Phyllis Schlafly's," [Page 282].

¹⁸ Kayla J. Hastrup, "The Feminine Mistake: Burkean Frames in Phyllis Schlafly's Equal Rights Amendment Speeches" (master's thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2015), [Page 1], accessed January 15, 2023, https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/52900/Hastrup_KJ_T_2015.pdf;sequence=1.

¹⁹ Hastrup, "The Feminine," [Page 16].

²⁰ Hastrup, "The Feminine," [Page 4].

²¹ Hastrup, "The Feminine," [Page 24].

²² Jon A. Shields, "Between Passion and Deliberation: The Christian Right and Democratic Ideals," *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 1 (2007): [Page 90], <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20202810>.

²³ Phyllis Schlafly, "The Effect of ERAs in State Constitutions," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, August 1979, [Page 2], accessed April 27, 2023, <https://eagleforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PSR-Aug1979.pdf>.

²⁴ John T. Jost et al., "The Politics of Fear: Is There an Ideological Asymmetry in Existential Motivation?," *Social Cognition* 35, no. 4 (August 2017): [Page 325], <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2017.35.4.324>.

dishonest, and deceitful.”²⁵ Susan E. Marshall, author, and sociology professor at the University of Texas at Austin, analyzed two anti-feminist waves: the women’s suffrage battle and the ERA debate. She drew a similar conclusion to Shields, namely that the inflammatory rhetoric of the New Right, which sustained this wave of anti-feminism, “wearied followers, alienated potential political allies, and provided an easy target for enemies to brand the movement as extremist.”²⁶ The parallels between these two movements reiterate how the Schlafly (along with the New Right) instilled fear in their supporters.

Lisa Levenstein, director of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program at UNC Greensboro, discusses how Schlafly delegitimized the work of feminists supporting homemakers wherein she cites the American magazine, *The New Republic*, which observed that “most of Schlafly’s major arguments against ERA are outrageous fabrications, but they are so artful and so brazenly repeated that Schlafly has put ERA proponents on the defensive in state after state.”²⁷ Aligning with *The New Republic* magazine and most other scholarly works, the analysis of Phyllis Schlafly’s work is “predominantly negative and serves solely as prevailing threats to the women’s movement.”²⁸

However, not all scholars agree on the implications of Schlafly’s work or how researchers should analyze her work. Hastrup argues current research on Phyllis Schlafly and the anti-ERA movement is from a feminist lens and is, therefore, “unsatisfactory when applied to critical rhetorical analysis of anti-feminist rhetoric.”²⁹ Hastrup urges scholars to approach Schlafly with fairness or objectivity. What’s more, Hastrup argues Schlafly’s “early life and political trajectory,” although she would disagree, “suggest an inherently feminist, yet also strongly conservative and domestic value agenda.”³⁰ This perspective opposes most literature that considers Schlafly starkly anti-feminist. While researchers have different conclusions on Schlafly’s tactics, no current literature analyzes Schlafly’s work and impact alongside media advertisements.

In 1963, Betty Friedan wrote, in her bestselling book, *The Feminine Mystique*, that “American women, especially suburban women, suffered from deep discontent.”³¹ Women have testified this book changed their lives, and many historians argue it began modern feminism.³² While not directly pertaining to Phyllis Schlafly, noting the feminist response to the depiction of women in 1950s advertisements is necessary when contextualizing Schlafly’s work. *The Feminine Mystique* popularized that women were stifled by their association with the domestic sphere, stereotypes, and discrimination. Friedan argued “popular magazines represented a repressive force” and highlighted the relationship between mass media and attitudes toward women.³³ Advertising, specifically, reinforced popular, sexist attitudes in post-war America.³⁴ Bonnie J. Fox of King’s College in London analyzed *Ladies Home Journal* advertisements and found “the ideology implicit to advertisements is a clue to housewives’ consciousness about their situation and their responsibilities since advertisers must appeal to that consciousness as well as shape it.”³⁵ Fox further

²⁵ Shields, "Between Passion," [Page 94].

²⁶ Susan E. Marshall, "Who Speaks for American Women? The Future of Antifeminism," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 515 (1991): [Page 61], <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1046927>.

²⁷ L. Levenstein, "'Don't Agonize, Organize!': The Displaced Homemakers Campaign and the Contested Goals of Postwar Feminism," *Journal of American History* 100, no. 4 (March 1, 2014): [Page 1135], <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jau007>.

²⁸ Hastrup, "The Feminine," [Page 12].

²⁹ Hastrup, "The Feminine," [Page 12].

³⁰ Hastrup, "The Feminine," [Page 64].

³¹ Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946- 1958," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 4 (1993): [Page 1455], <https://doi.org/10.2307/2080212>.

³² Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine," [Page 1455-1456].

³³ Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine," [Page 1457].

³⁴ Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine," [Page 1470].

³⁵ Bonnie J. Fox, "Selling the Mechanized Household: 70 Years of Ads in Ladies Home Journal," *Gender and Society* 4, no. 1 (1990): [Page 26], <http://www.jstor.org/stable/189957>.

explains as the housework was becoming mechanized, housewives attempted “to give structure and meaning to privatized, low-status work, which is entangled in their relations with their spouses and children”³⁶ As a reaction to the advertisements in Friedan’s chapter “The Sexual Sell,” she writes, “someone must have figured out that women will buy more things if they are kept in the underused, nameless-yearning, energy-to-get-rid-of state of being housewives.”³⁷ The media’s portrayal of women over-sexualized and objectified women while attempting to sell beauty. At the same time, it also suggested the need for women to be perfect mothers and to serve their families in their domestic roles.³⁸ I hypothesize that anti-ERA leaders like Schlafly reinforced the women’s role in the domestic sphere perpetuated by advertisements.

Method

In this paper, I explore Schlafly’s language and its connection to previous media representation to keep women in the domestic sphere. To evaluate Schlafly’s effectiveness, I sought to answer the question: To what extent did the portrayal of women in 1950s advertisements shape the movement against the Equal Rights Movement?

I used an inductive thematic content analysis to quantify the overlaps in their arguments. Initially, I would need to perform a thematic analysis because of the expected differences in the content and wording and the different periods, intentions, and subjects.

The most accessible way to analyze content from Phyllis Schlafly was her published work called *The Phyllis Schlafly Reports* (“*The Reports*”), where she shared her opinions and the opinions of those who shared her beliefs. Each Report was four pages long and found on her organization’s website (The Eagle Forum). Eric C. Miller used *The Reports* and her book *The Power of the Positive Woman* as his data to explore two concepts of freedom.³⁹ But, considering my time frame, using her book along with *The Reports* was not feasible. Furthermore, Marshall asserts *The Reports* “laid the groundwork for the anti-feminist movement.”⁴⁰ Therefore, I analyzed *The Reports* alone.

Schlafly published her first article in August 1967 and the last in August 2016. However, as I focused on the ERA, I only chose articles from 1972 (when Schlafly first engaged in the anti-ERA movement) to 1982 (the ERA ratification deadline). These parameters produced 22 articles. I further refined the content for relevancy by only selecting articles pertaining to the ERA or women. In addition, I only coded language written by Schlafly and did not include the content she quoted. These parameters eliminated five additional articles because they only contained reprinted articles not written by Phyllis Schlafly. In total, I coded seventeen *Phyllis Schlafly Reports*.

I first read through all seventeen articles to find preliminary ideas, which I tracked in a Google Sheet. I developed an inductive set of codes on the authority of the initial read. Choosing a deductive method was not feasible due to the lack of coding sets of anti-feminism research. I then categorized each code into seven different themes: (1) Traditional views of women and their roles, (2) Protecting Her (Schlafly) Privilege Not in Terms of Gender, (3) In Terms of Feminists, People Breaking the Status Quo, (4) Men Inherently Superior to Women, (5) Fear Tactics, (6) Religion (Christian Right), and (7) Equality is Unwanted and Unnecessary (**FIG 1**) to understand better and analyze the implications of the findings. I analyzed the text by paragraph, resulting in 486 passages. Suppose I decided that an additional code applied to a particular text; I reviewed the content I already coded to see if that additional code was appropriate for the previously coded text. Some of the text did not pertain to women. For instance, one of Schlafly’s arguments was that the ERA would lead to the expansion of the federal government. I choose not to include this content because it does not directly pertain to the subject and would invalidate the research.

³⁶ Fox, “Selling the Mechanized,” [Page 26].

³⁷ Judith A. Freeman, “The distorting image: women and advertising, 1900-1960” (master’s thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1984), [Page 42], accessed January 16, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.7275/wt9x-4n86>.

³⁸ Freeman, “The distorting,” [Page 20].

³⁹ Miller, “Phyllis Schlafly’s,” [Page 280].

⁴⁰ Marshall, “Who Speaks,” [Page 56].

CODE	THEME
White supremacist ideas	Protecting her privilege not in terms of gender
Reinforces beauty standards	Traditional views of women and their roles
Racist	Protecting her privilege not in terms of gender
Wife more dedicated to husbands	Traditional views of women and their roles
Against special privileges towards women in the workforce	Traditional views of women and their roles
Critical of mainstream culture	In terms of feminists, people breaking status quo
Agrees with feminists	In terms of feminists, people breaking status quo
Real champions of work is product developers	Traditional views of women and their roles
Women within the public sphere	In terms of feminists, people breaking status quo
Victimizes men for enduring social changes	Men inherently superior to women
“Boys will be boys”	Men inherently superior to women
feminists are oversexualized	In terms of feminists, people breaking status quo
Compares sex discrimination to race discrimination	Protecting her privilege not in terms of gender
Exploitation of women	In terms of feminists, people breaking status quo
Critical of men in domestic sphere	Men inherently superior to women
Praises America	Men inherently superior to women
Alienates people who disagree	Fear tactics
Argument relies on religion	Religion (Christian Right)
Anti-abortion	Traditional views of women and their roles
Government is misusing resources (towards women)	Traditional views of women and their roles
Anti-LGBTQ	Protecting her privilege not in terms of gender
Media supports feminists	In terms of feminists, people breaking status quo
Women can not make decisions for themselves	Traditional views of women and their roles
Revoke privileges	Fear tactics
Women as selfless	Traditional views of women and their roles
Women’s duty to protect children	Traditional views of women and their roles
Women are vulnerable	Traditional views of women and their roles
Against sex neutral language	Traditional views of women and their roles

CODE	THEME
Women are calculated	In terms of feminists, people breaking status quo
Argues gender equality as already achieved	Equality is unwanted and unnecessary
Homemakers as minorities	Equality is unwanted and unnecessary
Praises men	Men inherently superior to women
Women's paramount duty is her children	Traditional views of women and their roles
Criticize women for their intelligence	Traditional views of women and their roles
Women want to be a homemaker	Traditional views of women and their roles
Women enjoy housework	Traditional views of women and their roles
Women are delusional	Traditional views of women and their roles
Victimizes women	Traditional views of women and their roles
Unmarried in negative light	Traditional views of women and their roles
Women aligning with "feminine traits"	Traditional views of women and their roles
Women need protection	Traditional views of women and their roles
Belittles women	Traditional views of women and their roles
Derogatory language towards feminists	In terms of feminists, people breaking status quo
Invoke fear	Fear tactics
Life is easier for women	Traditional views of women and their roles
Women who do not want to be equal with men	Equality is unwanted and unnecessary
Implies women to be agreeable	Traditional views of women and their roles
Happily married	Traditional views of women and their roles
Husbands to support wives	Men inherently superior to women
Women have privilege	Traditional views of women and their roles
Government will take women's privileges	Fear tactics
Family values (protecting the nuclear family structure)	Traditional views of women and their roles
Shows fear of change	Fear tactics
Establishes difference between men and women	Traditional views of women and their roles
ERA supporters as frauds	In terms of feminists, people breaking status quo
Situates women within the domestic sphere	Traditional views of women and their roles

Figure 1: Codes and Themes

I did not create a parameter of how many codes can be applied to one text to ensure that each text was adequately represented by the codes. After using these codes in the articles, I collected the frequencies of each code. Given the different amounts of content in each source type, I determined that percentages would be the most effective way to present the findings.

I then moved to the second stage of the research process: the data collection of 1950s media advertisements. Advertisers produced a significant amount of content during the 1950s with a female subject. Researchers have approached advertisement synthesis featuring a female subject in different ways. For instance, Katharina Lindner of the University of Hartford tracked women's fashion magazines between 1955 and 2002. She examined *Time* magazines "in the first four weeks of January and June in the years 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985, 1995, and 2002 as well as the January and June issues of *Vogue* in the same years."⁴¹ Lindner argues that using the months of January and June standardizes the research and avoids bias while representing different parts of the year.⁴² However, Ahmed Belkaoui, Professor Emeritus at the University of Ottawa, and Janice M. Kelaoui analyzed nine different periodicals from the second week of January 1958.⁴³ Similar to Lindner and Belkaoui, I used content that was directed to the overall population, both men and women, which would "show women in greater variety."⁴⁴ *Life* was a predominantly picture magazine that reached a wide audience⁴⁵ and "led all American magazines in gross advertising revenues in 1955 with \$121,003,000."⁴⁶ However, considering my goal to learn about how these advertisements affected women, I also chose an equal part of magazines from the *Ladies Home Journal*. According to Sheila Webb, a researcher with focus on the role of media and magazines in culture, the *Ladies Home Journal* was the most influential women's magazine in the teens.⁴⁷ I used a systematic random sampling method to reduce the number of advertisements within the magazine.

In Belkaoui's data selection, he collected advertisements from 1958 because he argued it was "a full decade before any attempts by women's rights groups to force the issue into public awareness."⁴⁸ However, my research does not support this argument as feminist thought permeated the public sphere. Instead, I used the book *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan as a benchmark. It was published in 1963, selling three million copies within the first three years in print;⁴⁹ therefore, proving the book's widespread impact. Using Belkaoui's model, I used the publication year of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), a book that raised consciousness about women's portrayal in the media, as a starting point. I analyzed articles from 1953 and, similarly to Lindner, analyzed content at a regular interval of three years to examine 1956 and 1959. *Life* Magazine is published weekly, while the *Ladies Home Journal* is published monthly. I used a systematic random sampling to choose the month and week for the *Life* Magazine but differentiated between winter and summer, like Lindner. I repeated the process for the *Ladies Home Journal*. However, since it is a monthly

⁴¹ Katharina Lindner, "Images of Women in General Interest and Fashion Magazine Advertisements from 1955 to 2002," *Sex Roles* 51, no. 7/8 (October 2004): [Page 413], <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:SERS.0000049230.86869.4d>.

⁴² Lindner, "Images of Women," [Page 413].

⁴³ Ahmed Belkaoui and Janice M. Belkaoui, "A Comparative Analysis of the Roles Portrayed by Women in Print Advertisements: 1958, 1970, 1972," *Journal of Marketing Research* 13, no. 2 (1976): [Page 169], <https://doi.org/10.2307/3150853>.

⁴⁴ Belkaoui and Belkaoui, "A Comparative," [Page 169].

⁴⁵ Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1956), [Page 230], <https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/lookupid?key=olbp38454>.

⁴⁶ Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth*, [Page 233].

⁴⁷ Sheila Webb, "The Consumer-Citizen: 'Life' Magazine's Construction of a Middle-Class Lifestyle through Consumption Scenarios," *Studies in Popular Culture* 34, no. 2 (2012): [Page 43], <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23416397>.

⁴⁸ Belkaoui and Belkaoui, "A Comparative," [Page 169].

⁴⁹ Melissa Dearey, "'Betty Friedan: a Tribute,'" *Sociological Research Online* 11, no. 3 (September 30, 2006): [Page 1], accessed April 13, 2023, <https://www.socresonline.org.uk/11/3/dearey.html>.

magazine, I conducted systematic random sampling for each month, still differentiating between winter and summer. I counted the number of advertisements with a female subject, including feminine hands, females with husbands, females with children, females with other females, and females by themselves. This calculation resulted in 151 advertisements between the two magazines. However, because of time constraints, I analyzed every second advertisement for the *Life Magazine* and every four advertisements for the *Ladies Home Journal*. There are significantly more advertisements pertaining to women in the *Ladies Home Journal* compared to the *Life Magazine* in the years evaluated. Then, I applied the codes developed from *The Reports* to the selected advertisements.

Limitations

Before discussing the findings, mentioning the study's limitations is important. In terms of the content, I could not access complete volumes of *Ladies Home Journal* in 1956. Therefore, one limitation is the limited perspective from women's magazines in 1956. Given this limitation, I did not gather a wider view of the mid-1950s regarding women's magazines. However, I did not notice a significant difference between the 1953 and 1959 advertisements and can therefore assume that 1956 followed a similar pattern.

One of my conclusions is that anti-feminist women in the anti-ERA debate internalized media advertisements that portrayed them as housewives. One limitation of this conclusion is that I only researched anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly. Therefore, considering my findings, I can only conclude that Phyllis Schlafly internalized these stereotypes. However, as Phyllis Schlafly led the anti-ERA movement, I can gather that Schlafly set the tone for the movement, and many anti-feminists were like-minded.

Throughout the process, I was cognizant of bias. As a researcher, I am aware of my preconceived opinions on feminism and anti-feminists. Furthermore, the fact that I am a young, Generation-Z female could be represented in my findings, adding bias. Equally important, interpretive bias could have been present as I was the only contributor to this finding's coding process. Namely, the code 'Belittles women' could be interpreted differently because researchers would have different opinions about what is true "belittlement." However, I aligned the use of the code as per the Merriam-Webster definition of 'belittle' "to speak slightingly of; to cause (a person or thing) to seem little or less." Phyllis Schlafly arguably believed the ERA 'belittles' women. However, as did previous scholarly work, my research concluded that the anti-feminist movement stifled women's participation in the public sphere, which meant that women sought to protect their comfort in the domestic sphere. One reason I conclude this as a limitation is that Kayla J. Hastrup's work, which explains that when researchers approach Schlafly through a feminist lens, is not representative of her work as an anti-feminist.

Although I did not approach this method through a feminist lens, some codes applied to *The Reports* and magazines could be interpreted, when applied to the content, differently based on my sensitivity towards the content and interpretive bias. Therefore, interpretive bias remains a limitation of this research. In the section 'Conclusion/Calls for Further Research,' I outline future ways to mitigate this bias.

One significant point to mention is that between the magazines and *The Reports*, the thematic codes arose in different manners. For instance, the code 'family values' was apparent in magazines and *The Reports*. The following table shows two ways the code 'family values' appeared in the two media types. This is important because even if content represented the code on a smaller scale, it was given the same point value as content that overwhelmingly expressed said code. Although this is a limitation, this method ensures that despite the significance of content, all information was given the same level of importance to the overall findings.

<p><u>Phyllis Schlafly Report, February 1972</u></p>	<p><u>Ladies Home Journal February, 1953</u>⁵⁰</p>
<p>“We have the immense good fortune to live in a civilization which respects the family as the basic unit of society. This respect is part and parcel of our laws and our customs. It is based on the fact of life which no legislation or agitation can erase -- that women have babies and men don't.”⁵¹</p>	

Figure 2: Differences in Thematic Codes

Results

The following data and analysis comprise of a compilation of the three media sources used, including *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, *Life Magazine*, and *Ladies Home Journal*. The following charts represent each theme.

I viewed all content similarly with the same 56 codes applied in the context of seven themes. In addition, I valued each code at equal importance of 1 point. The following codes are represented in the seven themes through percentage ratios. (FIG 2-7) In the charts below, the first bar (orange) represents *Life Magazine*, the second (blue) represents *The Reports*, and the third (green) represents the *Ladies Home Journal*. All y-axis percentages are different on each graph, which is necessary to note to understand the frequencies of each theme properly.

⁵⁰ Listerine Antiseptic, "Listerine Antiseptic Quick! For Everyone," advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal*, February 1953, [Page 175], accessed April 27, 2023,

<https://archive.org/details/ladieshomejourna70janwyet/page/n174/mode/1up?view=theater>.

⁵¹ Phyllis Schlafly, "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women?," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, February 1972, [Page 1], accessed April 27, 2023, <https://eagleforum.org/publications/psr/feb1972.html>.

Traditional Views of Women and Their Roles

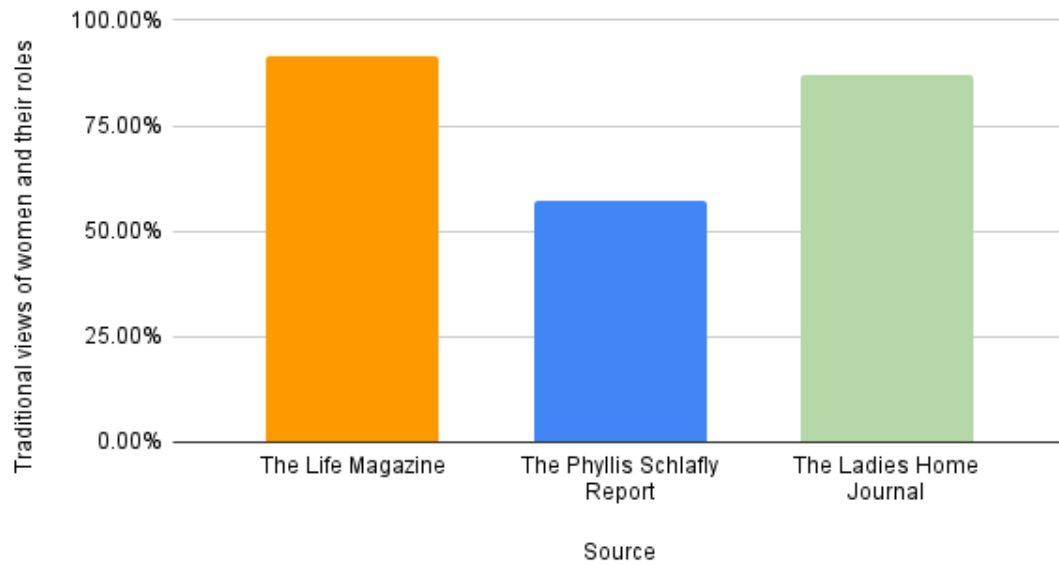


Figure 3 - Traditional Views of Women and Their Roles

Religion (Christian Right)

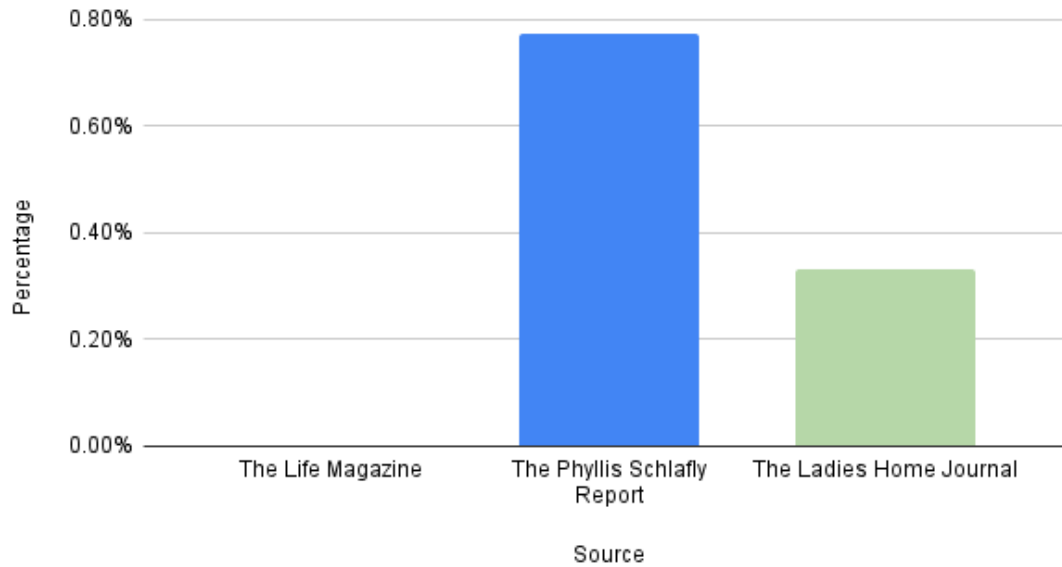


Figure 4 - Religion (Christian Right)

Protecting Her (Schlafly) Privilege Not in Terms of Gender

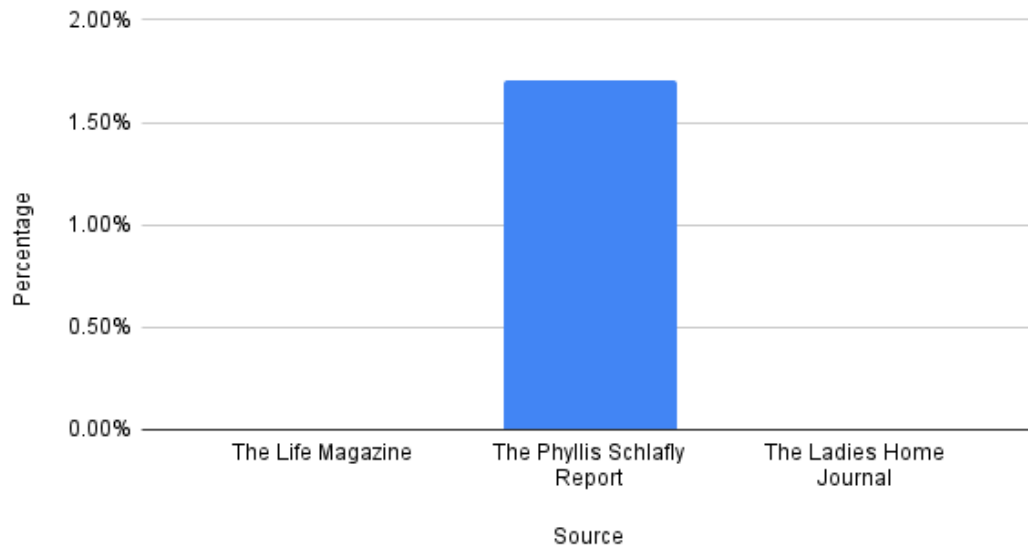


Figure 5 - Protecting Her (Schlafly) Privilege, Not in Terms of Gender

Men Inherently Superior to Women

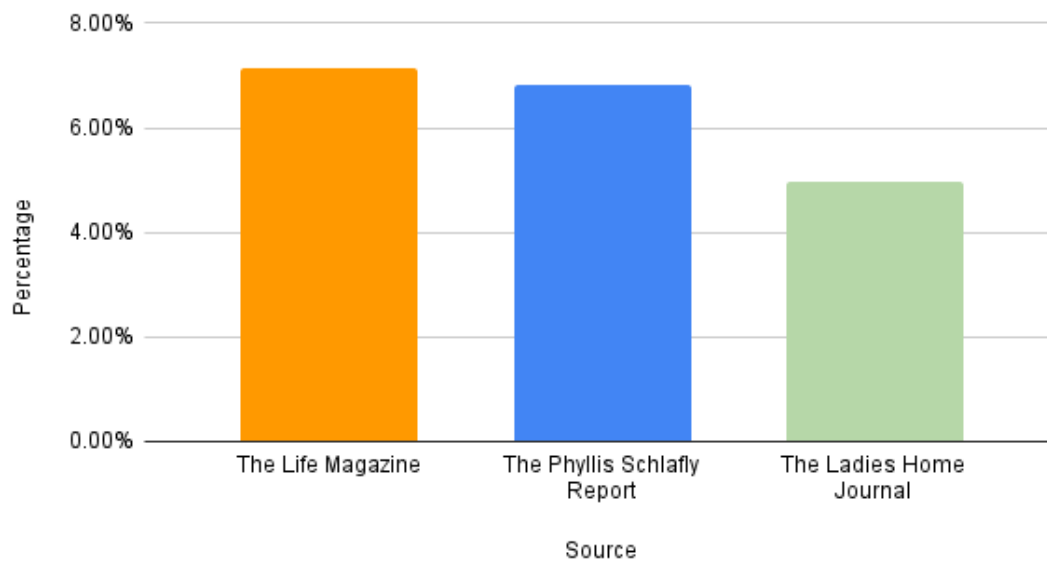


Figure 6 - Men Inherently Superior to Women

In Terms of Feminists, People Breaking Status Quo

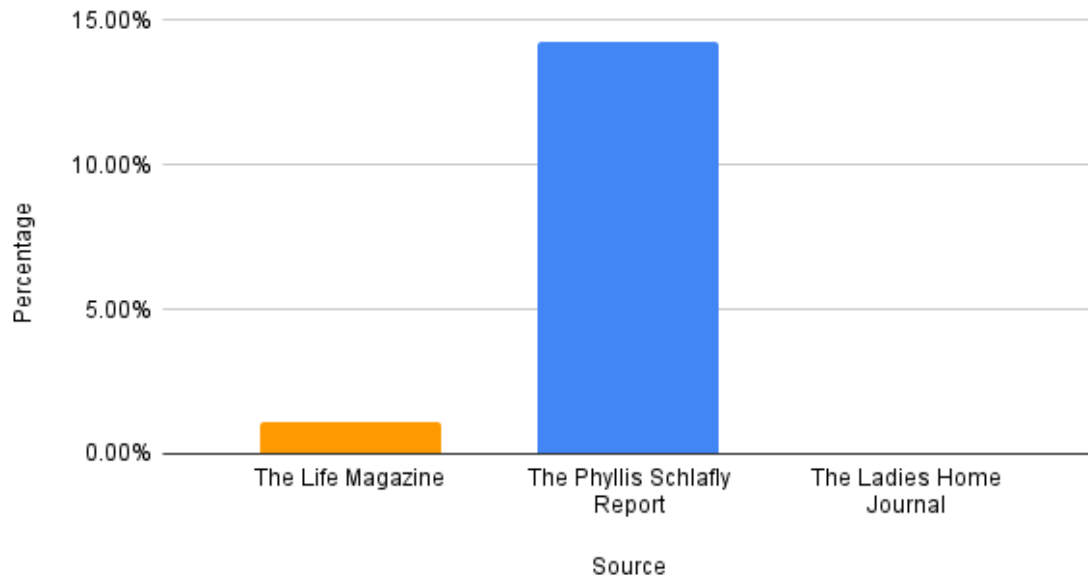


Figure 7 - In Terms of Feminists, People Breaking Status Quo

Equality is Unwanted and Unnecessary

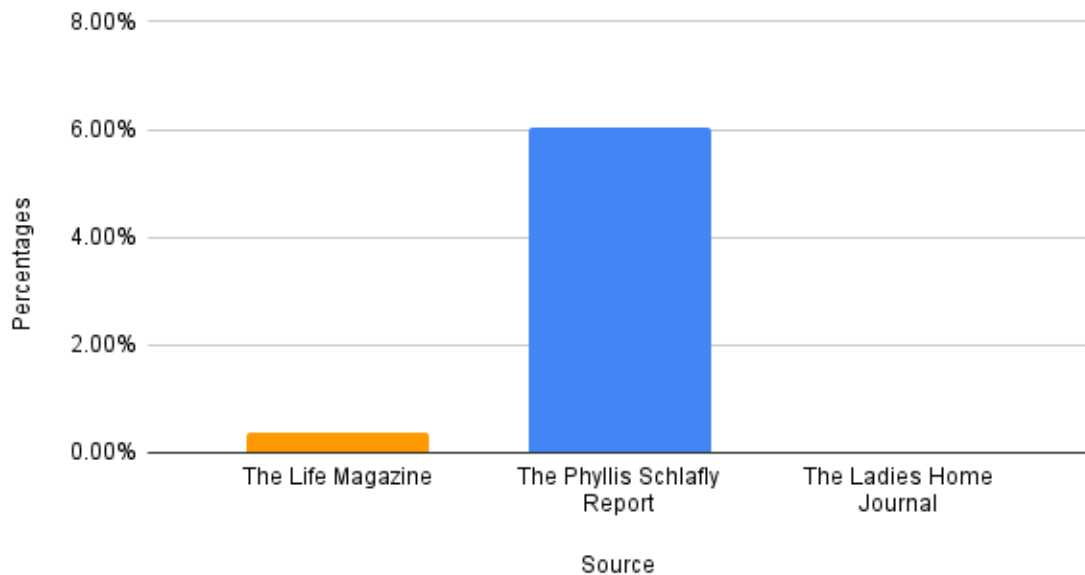


Figure 8 - Equality is Unwanted and Unnecessary

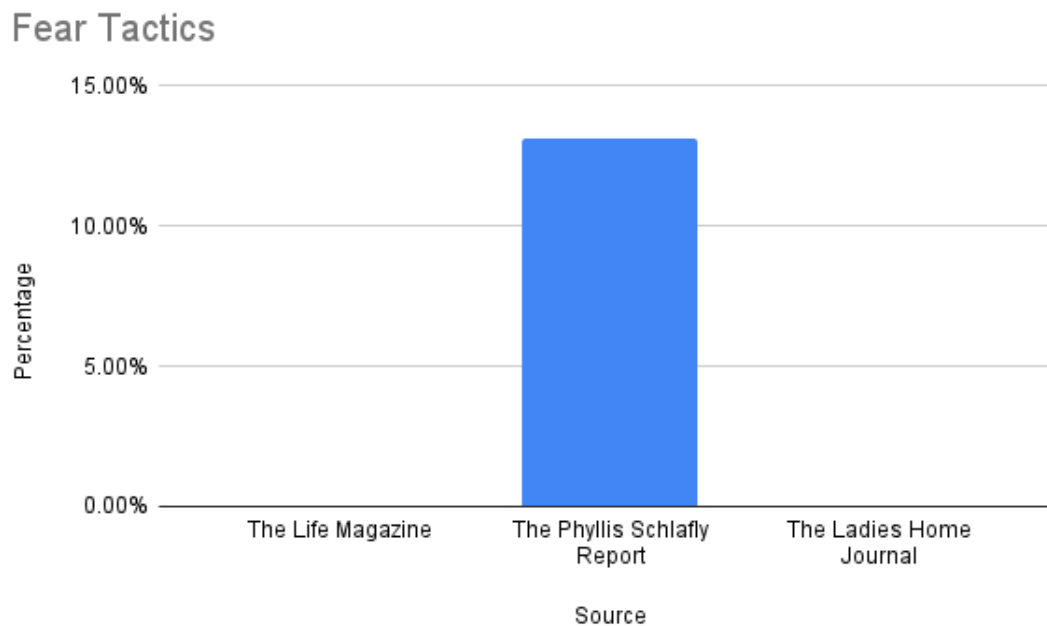


Figure 9 - Fear Tactics

Discussion

This study reiterates previous findings that Schlafly sought to preserve the status quo. However, this study is different as it connects her advocacy to media and advertisements, which mainstreamed her case. The results indicate advertisements helped Schlafly comprehensively illustrate the messages she advocated for. Schlafly and the media pursued the notion that women were privileged to have an easier life in the domestic sphere. The recognized view of a housewife, perpetrated by the media, propelled the anti-ERA movement. She conveyed that most women wanted and had access to this lifestyle, establishing that people trying to disrupt this status quo were delusional and ill-advised. Schlafly's advocacy drew direct parallels to the way the media portrayed women.

Overall, the results can be interpreted as a cause and effect. To demonstrate, 91.36961% of the codes applied to the *Life Magazine* were under the theme '**Traditional views of women and their roles,**' flagging codes such as 'Women within the domestic sphere,' 'Women enjoy housework,' and 'Women aligning with feminine traits.'

Similarly, in *Ladies Home Journal*, 87.086093% of codes identified were under the theme '**Traditional views of women and their roles.**' Implications of these findings indicate that the magazines reinforced the traditional expectations of women. *The Reports* flagged the same theme at 57.269915% (considerably different from the magazines but significant considering high frequencies of "effect/reactionary" themes).

Thus, the effect shown in *The Reports* is proven in the presence of themes like '**Fear tactics**' at 13.1477185% and '**Equality is unwanted and unnecessary,**' at 6.03248%. The subsequent themes, I conclude, are reactions to the feminist mobilization as Schlafly worked to protect her privilege. The most prevalent codes under these themes were 'Shows fear of change,' 'Government will take women's privileges,' and portrays 'ERA supporters as frauds.' Under the cause and effect theory, Schlafly used the recognizable messages of women in the domestic sphere to maintain the nuclear family structure that she argued women benefited from. When answering the research question, there is a significant correlation between messages from the media to Schlafly's language in the debate against the ERA. Implications of this correlation prove that preceding media was instrumental in the anti-ERA movement because it reinforced popular notions, proven in the similar language and codes flagged in the theme '**Traditional views of women and their roles.**'

Furthermore, based on previous research, this study amplifies how “home magazines cater to homemakers and/or women with families whose interests lie in gender-role traditional pursuits.”⁵² Schlafly used language and imagery similar to that in the advertisements.

Moreover, she even credited product developers for making homemakers’ lives easier in her first article.

These findings also undermine Schlafly’s claims that feminists benefitted from media coverage during the ERA debate. Schlafly’s claim fails when one considers the media content published before the ERA debate that consistently situated women within the domestic sphere. To illustrate, in her November 1972, Schlafly argues, “Women’s magazines, the women’s pages of newspapers, and television and radio talk shows have been filled for months with a strident advocacy of the “rights” of women to be treated on an equal basis with men in all walks of life.”⁵³ However, considering the high frequencies of **‘Traditional views of women and their roles’** between all sources, Schlafly’s claim is erroneous. While some media during the ERA debate may have had a feminist perspective, it did not undo the decades of media that pushed women into the domestic sphere. This notion is evident in this research because of the correlation between the magazines and *The Reports* discussing women.

The findings also indicate a similar pattern when discussing Schlafly’s language towards feminists, **“In terms of feminists, people breaking the status quo”** present 14.26914% in *The Report*. The negative, aggressive diction towards feminists can again be characterized as an effect of the depiction of women in magazines. By creating a polarized and adversarial relationship, Schlafly characterized feminists as “unkempt, the lesbians, the radicals, the Socialists, and the government employees who are trying to amend the U.S. Constitution to force us to conform to their demands” as described in the June 1976 issue of *The Report*. This research considers this language to be derogatory towards feminists. One implication of this language is it further situates the anti-ERA movement within the “conservative culture war movements.”⁵⁴ As described in the literature review, and similar to Shield’s conclusions, the language and advocacy tactics used in the anti-ERA debate encouraged “moral righteousness by contrasting good and evil, the light and the dark, and the saved and the damned.”⁵⁵ Schlafly’s intent to distinguish between feminists and anti-feminists supports the notion that the anti-ERA movement was an outgrowth of the Christian Right movement. One limitation of this conclusion is that the religious argument was limited in *The Reports* at 0.773395%. However, Schlafly’s “moral” argument is very similar to the Christian Right’s, even if “God” was not specifically mentioned. To define similar moral arguments, both the Christian Right movement and Phyllis Schlafly discussed preserving the family structure, advocating against LGBTQ+ rights, and religious education in public schools, to name a few.

An additional code worth pinpointing is ‘Reinforces beauty standards’ (represented in the theme **‘Traditional views of women and their roles’**), as it was more prevalent in both magazines. At the same time, *The Reports Included* minimal presence of the reinforcement of beauty standards. However, most women at the forefront of the anti-ERA movement were white and slim, adhering to traditional beauty standards. In terms of magazines, many food advertisements directed towards women encouraged women to diet. They enforced the notion that for women to be worthy, they needed to be thin. The women in the advertisements also looked similar to the anti-feminist leaders. I hypothesize that Schlafly does not discuss beauty standards specifically because it is irrelevant in a legislative context. However, it is worth mentioning that her discussion of feminists as “unkempt” reinforces that women should adhere to traditional beauty standards. Notably, every evaluated advertisement displayed white women. The exclusion of women of color

⁵² Terri D. Conley and Laura R. Ramsey, "Killing Us Softly? Investigating Portrayals of Women and Men in Contemporary Magazine Advertisements," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (August 31, 2011): [Page 470], <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684311413383>.

⁵³ Phyllis Schlafly, "The Right to Be a Woman," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, November 1972, [Page 1], accessed April 27, 2023, <https://eagleforum.org/publications/psr/nov1972.html>.

⁵⁴ Miller, "Phyllis Schlafly's," [Page 277].

⁵⁵ Shields, "Between Passion," [Page 93].

from leading women's magazines proves the "picture perfect" nuclear family was based on white individuals instead of the broader US population.

Conclusion & Calls for Further Research

Not many women looked like those in the 1950s advertisements, but the ones that did, like Schlafly, wanted to hold her sense of comfort in the domestic sphere. This study drew parallels to media trends and later political advocacy. Therefore, it reiterates the impact of advertisements and media and its ability to dictate the status quo. This study supports the conclusion that the anti-ERA movement and its leadership benefitted from 1950s media advertisements. I argue that a similar method of thematic content analysis with media and political messaging can be replicated to measure the prevalence of media themes in subsequent political messaging trying to maintain existing social conditions. Furthermore, the cause-and-effect model is replicable to investigate the relationship between media and later political movements.

Still, further research can be conducted to measure the implications of 1950s media on women in the domestic sphere. In the age of social media, scholars stress the ramifications media has on young women and adolescents. However, the same attention should be given when evaluating the impact of 1950s media because it is clear, due to the findings of this study, that the advertisements left lasting impressions on viewers and anti-ERA advocates. As previously mentioned, this study did not quantify the issue of race in the 1950s media and the latter ERA debate. It would be beneficial to examine this topic through a racial lens further to understand the complexity of race within this issue. Further research could also reduce the limitations of this research by evaluating more content produced in the 1950s, such as television shows and articles, to get a more comprehensive understanding of female representation. In addition, the interpretive bias present in this study could be mitigated with additional researchers collaborating to devise a consistent sensitivity level of content reviewed. Ultimately, this study concludes that the relationship between Schlafly's work and 1950s media portrayal of women propelled the anti-ERA movement into a broader impact and effectiveness.

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