

2011

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Sexually Explicit, Socially Empowered: Sexual Liberation and Feminist Discourse in

1960s *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan*

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Humanities and Cultural Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:
September 22, 2011

Keywords: individualism, consumerism, careerism, sexuality, feminism

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Abstract

In this thesis, I provide an analysis of 1960s American popular culture by examining *Playboy*, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Cosmopolitan*, and *Sex and the Single Girl*. These cultural artifacts furthered the feminist movement by challenging gender structures and sexuality. I discuss how these publications focused on the advancement of the individual through careerism, consumerism and sexuality. These publications assisted in challenging and breaking down various aspects of gender and sexual boundaries and assisted in reworking social limitations that kept women from advancing themselves outside of the pre-set gender roles of domesticity. Regardless of the traditional feminist critique of Hugh Hefner and Helen Gurley Brown, this thesis argues that in fact these popular culture icons and their publications worked to re-negotiate sexual liberation, which assisted in furthering women’s liberation. This thesis analyzes the writings and advertisements of these publications and shows that Hugh Hefner and Helen Gurley Brown have positive correlations to feminist discourse.

Introduction

The 1960s in America led to a kind of sexual liberation for women that did not exist before in mainstream popular culture. With the popularity of *Playboy*, *Sex and the Single Girl*, and *Cosmopolitan*, these magazines sent women new cultural affirmations about their sexuality that tied together ideas of individualism and consumerism to sexual liberation. The integration of women's sexuality in popular culture was closely tied to the feminist movement of the 1950s and the second-wave Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s. Since the 1970s, many critics within the feminist movement have omitted various aspects of popular culture that promoted sexuality or attacked them as undermining the progress of feminism. Many theorists and feminists argue that this kind of sexual liberation undermined the progress of feminism. A majority of second wave feminists do not see merit in women's sexual liberation as a part of the vehicle of feminist discourse but consider it just another facet of the patriarchal system in play.¹ This thesis will explore through visual and textual analysis the qualitative content of conventional cultural artifacts such as popular magazines and best sellers that were common in mainstream culture during the 1960s, providing evidence as to how various

¹ Many historians of the feminist movement have not seen women's sexual liberation as a key effect of the progress of feminist liberation. For these feminists, sexuality was solely constructed by the power structure of males, and mainstream culture reinforced the submission of women in not only pornographic content, but in the sexism of literature. These feminists became the founders of the anti-pornography movement of the early 1970s. For more see Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (New York: Free Press, 1987); Catherine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) and *Only Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996) ; Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1983).

aspects of popular culture provided a positive correlation between sexual liberation and the women's movement.²

Helen Gurley Brown and Hugh Hefner, who tied their ideas of individualism and consumerism to sexual liberation, were both major figures in popular culture during the 1960s. Hefner's "The Playboy Philosophy" (1962) was a manifesto that combined human rights, political rights, and sexual liberation with a modern age vision. The social construction that Hefner set forth was directed primarily at men but entails basic concepts that revolve around individuality and consumerism, applicable to both genders. Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) also constructed a vision of individuality but was aimed directly at women. Brown's book promoted personal, financial and sexual independence for single women. These two iconic figures played a crucial role by providing a broader discourse that centered on the individual's needs. These discursive practices are later assimilated in popular culture magazines such as *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan*, which Hefner and Brown edited respectively. Their ideologies allowed for various productions of meaning to be translated into multiple new thought practices that were not considered before the 1950s.

The power of the consumer became a defining force of individuality in the 1960s for Americans. The strength of individual identity was connected to the fact that American's purchasing power designated their identities: individuals could and did define

² In opposition to the anti-pornography movement, there were feminists who labeled themselves sex-positive, and argued that sexual liberation was an essential part of women's freedom. Sex-positive feminism was a movement that began in the early 1980s. Sex-positive feminists opposed censorship, legal and social actions that control sexual activity, and any form of sexual repression. These feminists saw women's feminism and sexual liberation connected to thinking individuals who make sexual choices based on free will and individuality, defending pornography and sexuality as important aspects of free speech in feminism. For more on sex-positive feminism see Wendy McElroy, *XXX: A Woman's Right to Pornography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) and *Sexual Correctness: The Gender-Feminist Attack on Women* (Jefferson, N.C.; London: McFarland & Company Inc., 1996); Nadine Strossen, *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights* (New York: Scribner, 1995).

themselves by their product choices. Consumer trends reflected the kind of personality one wanted to present by pairing their buying choices with a direct connection to personal preferences based on individuality. Both *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan* reinforced this trend as a means of advancement and self-fulfillment.

Various aspects of *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan* can be analyzed to show how these changes in social discourse affected the women's movement. In looking at the content analysis of these magazines, not only do the images play an important role, but editorials, articles, advertisements, and letters to the editor all show an important shift of consciousness towards a freer and more accepted expression of sexuality that was occurring in the 1960s. This shift heralds in a new norm for mainstream popular culture that was evident by the 1970s.

The first chapter will look at the historical context of how women's social roles began changing through the 1950s and who the key players of this movement were. By presenting and exploring the cultural changes that occurred during this time period, one can argue that these events were the catalyst for a generational focus on the individual as the most important aspect of American culture. This chapter will look at how these concepts of feminism and sexuality began being openly explored and discussed by mainstream America.

The second chapter of this thesis will compare and contrast Hugh Hefner's "The Playboy Philosophy" and Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* as cultural artifacts that helped define and highlight the independence and freedom of the individual's choices. This chapter will also address how careerism, consumerism and sexuality became a pivotal vehicle for transforming past ideologies pertaining to certain

individuality and identity and how it was used to progress the feminist movement. This chapter will also address whether individualism and consumerism were a legitimate path to social change.

The third chapter will focus on the content analysis of both *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan*. An analysis of these magazines will look into the editorials, articles, advertisements, letters to the editors, and pictorials Americans were reading and appropriating into their everyday lives. The influence of these magazines made concepts surrounding feminism and sexuality part of a normative culture based on reinforcement through its content.

Chapter 1: Careerism, Consumerism and Sexuality in the 1960s

“Sexual expression is perhaps the most fundamental manifestation of human individuality. Erotic material is subversive in the sense that it celebrates, and appeals to, the most uniquely personal aspects of an individual's emotional life. Thus, to allow freedom of expression and freedom of thought in this realm is to...promote diversity and non-conformist behavior in general...”

Gary Mongiovi, PhD of Economics, St John's University

It was 1945 in America and there was no turning back. The end of World War II brought about an era of social and cultural transitions that affected every aspect of American life. The changes that occurred after World War II opened up doors that led to new ideologies and ways of life that were never part of mainstream American culture until this time period. Long before Bob Dylan's 1964 hit song, “The Times They Are A-Changing,” America scrambled to come to terms with the major ideological reconstructions that were shaping a new kind of individual. As sociologist Wini Breines states: “The period is characterized by shifts from production to consumption, from saving to spending, from city to suburb, from blue- to white-collar employment, and from an adult to a youth culture.”³ Entertainment forms, such as films, books and magazines, were aspects of mass culture everyone had access to, and these cultural artifacts redefined Americans' lives through their emphasis on the individual and their ability to recreate themselves in any image they chose. Women's books and magazines addressed women not only as housewives but also as powerful vehicles of consumption tied to the

³ Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 2.

individual's needs of personal satisfaction and autonomy. Cultural artifacts, such as popular magazines and bestsellers, not only sold Americans new images of themselves through a connection to consumption, but also embraced the individual's sexuality as an important aspect of the self. The conventional cultural artifacts, such as popular magazines and best sellers, that were common in mainstream culture during the 1960s provide evidence as to how popular culture constructed a positive correlation between consumption and sexual liberation and allowed women to redefine themselves.⁴ An important feature that stood out during this time was the shift to a consumer based economy. "An ethic that encouraged the purchase of consumer products also fostered an acceptance of pleasure, self gratification, and personal satisfaction, a perspective that easily translated to the province of sex."⁵ The changes that occurred in society during the post World War II period are directly linked to the messages that infiltrated the average person's home through mass mediated publications. This led to the unintended consequence of a more liberated female expression through society's focus on careerism, consumerism and sexuality.

It was during World War II that women started questioning gender boundaries that kept them locked inside the domestic sphere and limited their potentials for self-identity and expression. Options and images arose during this time that afforded new opportunities for challenging traditional philosophies and allowed women to break from

⁴ LeRoy Ashby sees society as embracing consumerism in the 1960s with its innovative advertisement campaigns, which assisted in "disrupting tradition, promoting rebellion, and encouraging the pursuit of pleasure, however forbidden." (349) Even toys represented a tie to sexuality and consumerism in the form of Barbie who "had a female adult body-albeit one with exaggerated breasts. She also suggested independence. And, with her emphasis on expensive clothes and possessions, she epitomized consumerism." LeRoy Ashby, *With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture Since 1830* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 389.

⁵ John D'Emilo and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 234.

their social places in the home and imagine other potentials for personal identification and expression. As World War II took men out of the workforce on a large scale, the government campaigned heavily to use women to replace the substantial industrial demand. The propaganda efforts of the Office of War Information (OWI) teamed up with the War Advertising Council to create an image of the working woman who still subscribed to the cultural notion of male dominance.⁶ “Rosie the Riveter” became an iconic national heroine whose image graced various magazine covers and reinforced the civic duty of women’s work in the defense industry.

The Saturday Evening Post’s 1943 image of Rosie, painted by Norman Rockwell, became one of the most famous representations of this ideal. This image of Rosie has a strikingly masculine undertone; “She is confident and looks powerful with her broad shoulders, hefty biceps, and wide leather watchstrap. Yet despite the grease smudges on her cheeks, she has done up her hair attractively and wears carefully applied makeup. A compact peeks out of her pocket.”⁷ Rosie became a kind of “pin-up girl” comparable to the images that Alberto Vargas made so popular during the 1940s. Vargas, who originally worked for the men’s magazine *Esquire* in the 1940s and then with *Playboy* in the 1960s, created pin-up renditions of sensual and sexually powerful females. These “Vargas Girls” found their way onto the nose art of American bombers, and these images that men so admired “were remarkably aggressive about their sexual desires and prowess.”⁸ The power, strength, and independence that the pin-up images conveyed also crossed over into the female psyche that saw these images “not as an unattainable fantasy

⁶ Carmine Sarracino and Kevin M. Scott, *The Porning of America: The Rise of the Porn Culture, What It Means and Where We Go from Here* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 51.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸ Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 212.

of the heterosexual male imagination, but as something they could both associate with and aspire towards.”⁹ Women began to emulate these images by producing their own versions of “pin-up” styled photographs to send to their men overseas, announcing that women were embracing the power of the sexually aggressive female as a part of their self-expression.¹⁰ The societal acceptance of this vision of strong yet feminine images worked to reinforce the message to women that their social roles could intertwine the national need of their work effort with their sexual selves. “The pin-up provided an outlet through which women might assert that their unconventional sexuality could coexist with conventional ideals of professionalism, patriotism, decency, and desirability – in other words, suggesting that a woman’s sexuality could be expressed as part of her whole being.”¹¹

Fashion trends seem to reflect the emergence of the pin-up image in popularizing a garment that reflected a more sexually aggressive female by introducing the world to the creation of a new swimsuit in 1946 that exposed the woman’s body to a state that was a step above nudity. In Paris, engineer Louis Réard and designer Jaques Hime collaborated to introduce the world to the smallest bathing suit ever. The bikini was invented right after the wake of the July 1, 1946 atomic bomb testing that took place on the Bikini atoll in the Pacific. Its name was taken from an event which was shocking and astounding and changed warfare. The bikini became a consumer product that allowed women to shock others by exposing more skin than ever in public places. The bikini became fashionable in the late 1950s but still conservatism prevailed in America. It was not until starlets began wearing bikinis that this new trend emerged into popularity

⁹ Ibid., 218.

¹⁰ Ibid., 225.

¹¹ Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls*, 231.

during the 1960s.¹² Fashion historian, Olivier Saillard, argues that the bikini established itself due to “the power of women, and not the power of fashion,” and that “the emancipation of swimwear has always been linked to the emancipation of women.”¹³ The sexual nature of the swimsuit as part of mainstream culture was a starting point to normalize sexuality in not only women but in fashion trends that reflected a more permissive attitude in the American culture.

Sara Evans, in *Born for Liberty*, states that sexual openness came into resurgence during this time period; “The theme of sexual liberation, relatively submerged during the Depression years, reemerged among the young people whose economic autonomy and separation from their home communities offered unprecedented opportunities for experimentation.”¹⁴ World War II became a time in which women had a patriotically backed reason to leave the boundaries of their homes and children. This afforded women the space to redefine themselves and their sexuality outside the confines of marriage. “Their generation had unprecedented personal and economic freedoms and opportunities to meet single men on a relatively level professional field.”¹⁵

The view of women’s positions changed dramatically at the end of World War II when, once again, women were being socially steered to return to their domesticated positions. The propaganda campaigns of World War II stressed the temporary nature of these working opportunities, and women were reminded that the returning soldiers were expected to go back to their jobs while women could then gratefully return to their housewifely positions in the home. “Recent scholarship has examined both the

¹² Kathryn Westcott, “The bikini: not a brief affair,” *BBC News* [UK], July 5, 2006 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5130460.stm>).

¹³ Ibid., (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5130460.stm>).

¹⁴ Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1989), 228.

¹⁵ Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls*, 216.

empowering wartime experience of women who entered the labor force and survived as wives and mothers alone and the concern on the part of men that women would become too independent, undomesticated, and unfeminine. The conservative messages regarding women in the post-war period were part of an effort to ensure that women went home and stayed home after the war, a policy of containment.”¹⁶ The end of the war marked a period of American expectation of “the material standard of living promised by the consumer economy” and the new roles of women were “to oversee the quality of this private life, to purchase wisely, and to serve as an emotional center of the family and home.”¹⁷ The autonomy and women’s new found agency in the professional sphere contrasted deeply with the post-war’s messages. “For young, white, middle-class women, the 1950s were a time when liberating possibilities were masked by restrictive norms; they grew up and came of age in a time when new lives beckoned while prohibitions against exploring them multiplied.”¹⁸

Yet the post-war emphasis on consumerism offered women a back-door route to a new era of liberation. New concepts of the consumer came into full swing in the late-1950s and the early-1960s. The individual became the personal focus of both men and women. Traditional gender roles were eventually challenged by mainstream popular culture’s embrace of a new ideal American: the single, unmarried person.¹⁹ The single person was open to make consumer choices that would lead to a better lifestyle. As the

¹⁶ Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable*, 33.

¹⁷ Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 229.

¹⁸ Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable*, 11.

¹⁹ D’Emilio and Freedman state that young singles of the 1960s were seen as an advantaged, highlighted, and coveted group. They argue that the “working class youth at the turn of the century had sustained a sexual subculture rooted in commercialized amusements. But the unmarried youth of the era had elicited pity, scorn, or fear from the middle class who sought to control their behavior and made them the object of reformation efforts. Now, in the 1960s, young adults of the middle class were glamorized; they embodied the unspoken fantasies of a consumer society extended to the sphere of sex.” *Intimate Matters*, 305.

consumption culture came into full swing, the working woman was seen as a necessity to this new kind of economy. New business in retail, marketing, advertising, and production required a steady flow of consumerism to ensure economic prosperity.²⁰ The post war period needed the single girl to supplement the rise of the consumer culture's new found expansion in retail and service industries, which drew both married and unmarried women into the work force.²¹ The working girl then became an important aspect of economic life and modern capitalism. She became a major influence on advertisers due to the large amounts of expendable income being generated by this consumption based society and their buying power.

The consumer society of the 1960s embraced the newly emerging singles culture and created outlets that revolved around singles lives. Singles bars, guidebooks, computer dating services, and apartment complexes, which catered specifically to young single lifestyles, sprang up across the country. As sexuality became a more mainstream and accepted concept of American life, advertisers used erotic and glamorous imagery to sell products to the singles lifestyle. Clothes, cosmetics, liquor, cigarettes, cars, stereo equipment, and various non sexual items intertwined product images into a sexual sell that reiterated the kinds of lifestyles that young singles were attempting to attain.²²

Popular culture became a driving element that helped individuals define themselves more visually through their buying choices. The message being sent out to Americans was a mixture of elements surrounding domesticity but new radical messages found their way to popularity through vehicles such as best sellers and magazine subscriptions.

²⁰ Ibid., 305.

²¹ Ibid., 305.

²² Ibid., 306.

Playboy, which came out in 1953, articulated a new consumer culture immersed in sexuality that became part of mainstream America. *Playboy* yielded a new vision of the American man; it also represented a new generational thinking that developed around individuality and personal needs. This magazine was directed at primarily middle class white men who wanted more out of life than just the daily grind of everyday living and the ties of matrimony.²³ *Playboy* addressed ideologies that were inherent from the beginnings of American society and linked liberty to the pursuit of happiness. This magazine reflected a change in culture that began in the mid-1950s with a direct emphasis on consumerism as a means for achieving greater social meaning.²⁴

In many ways *Playboy's* philosophies established the tropes of thought that emerged recoded in the women's movement of the 1960s. Founder Hugh Hefner seems like a strange bedfellow to the feminist movement, but in many ways the goal of his writings align with important aspects of feminist discourse that was prescribed by his contemporary Helen Gurley Brown, author of *Sex and the Single Girl* and editor of *Cosmopolitan*. In order for women to gain more independence, a new vision of character type and personal freedom was needed. Hefner states: "The individual's very individuality – his right to look, think and act as differently from his fellows as he chooses (without, of course, interfering with the similar rights of others) – supplies the

²³ Carrie Pitzulo states, "Regardless of its insistence on elegance and sophistication, *Playboy's* editors understood that they were promoting a lifestyle that was often out of reach for its readers"; *Playboy* argued that it could stimulate the dreams and desires of the reader, which in turn would motivate him or her to achieve a greater financial prosperity. Carrie Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 82-83.

²⁴ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 13. Cohen states that "'The Birth of the Consumers' Republic,' introduces the vision that won out, the notion of a Consumers' Republic that entrusted the private mass consumption marketplace, supported by government resources, with delivering not only economic prosperity but also loftier social and political ambitions for a more equal, free, and democratic nation." Cohen, 13.

divergent, interacting components that produce progress.”²⁵ In this way Hefner’s sentiments echoed the ideological claims to personal autonomy that was also being presented in other forms by both Helen Gurley Brown and feminist Betty Friedan.

This new vision of the single woman consumer was introduced into popular culture by bestselling author Helen Gurley Brown and her book *Sex and the Single Girl*, which came out in 1962. Criticized by later feminists for her focus on the individual over the group and in her choice to work with the system rather than overthrow it, Brown’s formula for feminism contrasted with the views of emerging second wave feminist ideologies which considered her a victim instead of a feminist who was in line with the ideologies of popular culture and capitalism.²⁶ Brown’s book was directed toward the single working woman and, even though it highlighted her sexual autonomy, the means in which this was achieved was through hard work in order to enjoy the pleasurable aspects of life.²⁷ Brown saw her readers’ main goal to be independence, while acknowledging that the reality was that women were still trapped by a gendered system.

The rise of the consumer culture created more spaces for women to find employment outside the home, but even the opportunities that were offered to women were still limited by traditional gender roles surrounding domesticity. Men were still

²⁵ Hugh M. Hefner, *The Playboy Philosophy* (Chicago: HMH Publishing Co., Inc., 1962), 39.

²⁶ Jennifer Scanlon, *Bad Girls Go Everywhere: The Life of Helen Gurley Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), xi. The second wave feminist movement came about in the early 1960s. Second wave feminism dealt with the inequalities of women in the social and political aspects of society. Unlike Helen Gurley Brown, they view popular culture as a sexist power structure. For more information see the writings of the key figures of second wave feminism such as; Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1963); Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Equinox Books, 1971); Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1970); Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement* (New York: Random House, 1970).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Scanlon states that Brown’s advice was particularly addressed towards “working-class or middle-class women lacking higher education or much professional training” and her brand of feminism was “more likely practiced by single women than by housewives, and by working-class secretaries rather than middle class college students...”, 74, x.

favored for upper level positions, and women were still paid considerably less for their work than men. Brown saw nothing wrong with working with the system to be able to advance one's life more comfortably. In most of America, women were living in a man's world and Brown advised the working woman to manipulate the situation in her favor.²⁸ Her contributions highlighted the potential of sex as a source of power and under no circumstances was Brown weary of using sexuality to advance her position in society. The notion of women as individual entities true only to themselves and their sexual needs is the main focus of Brown's writings. Brown argues that representations of women have drastically changed over time and, as gender roles for women change from solely family caregivers, they are freer to experience a more fulfilled and enriched life as sexually active within and outside the boundaries of matrimony. Brown's focus is on women's ability to choose freely the kind of lifestyle they want to have. Brown states, "You may marry or you may not. In today's world that is no longer the big question for women. Those who glom on to men so they can collapse with relief, spend the rest of their days shining up their status symbol and figure they never have to reach, stretch, learn, grow, face dragons or make a living again are the ones to be pitied. They, in my opinion are the unfulfilled ones."²⁹

As a feminist contemporary to Helen Gurley Brown, Betty Friedan came out with *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. Written a year after *Sex and the Single Girl*, Friedan's conservative and wary views of mainstream culture sees popular magazines as "a

²⁸ Ibid., xii.

²⁹ Helen Gurley Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1962), 89.

repressive force, imposing damaging images on vulnerable American women.”³⁰

According to Friedan society as a whole repressed women through its use of the “feminine mystique” as an “ideological stranglehold.” “This repressive ‘image’ held that women could ‘find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love.’”³¹ This book too became a best seller but the message was focused on views that were emerging within a second wave feminist movement. The discontent of the American woman was labeled as, “the problem that has no name.”³² Friedan was a catalyst in the second wave feminist movement that sprang up during the mid 1960s. As one of the founders of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, this organization campaigned for antidiscrimination laws and democracy.

Helen Gurley Brown and Betty Friedan may have two conflicting ideologies surrounding feminism, but in fact Brown’s may have proven to be more far-reaching. Considering the popularity of *Sex and the Single Girl*, and Brown’s later contribution to the bestselling magazine *Cosmopolitan* as editor in chief, it seems as if mainstream Americans saw themselves in the way Brown wrote about individualism, sexuality, and career focus that emerged with the post-war consumer economy. Granted, these publications were presenting an image of beauty being sold to consumers in pretty new glossy packages; nevertheless, these purchases were the new found choices of women who were earning their own income, living single, and away from family, and generally supporting themselves on a still gender biased wage that underpaid women employees.

³⁰ Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958,” in Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 231.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 229.

³² Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1963), 66.

Helen Gurley Brown was quite aware of these limitations, but believed in the capitalist system as a way for women to attain a sense of self and social status that would further their advancement in society.³³ Brown believed that self-esteem, and a complete acceptance of one's power as a woman, could be used and reworked to further her lifestyle choices. Trading sexual favors for gifts, dinners, and outings was a way for women to work within a system that would not let them fully access all the possibilities afforded to men. "Unlike other feminists among her peers, who would attempt to eliminate such sexual and economic exchanges between the sexes, Brown views the imbalance as one that requires a recalibration rather than a rejection. In her view, men who earn the wealth ought to share it, and who better to partake of such benefits than the women who share their sexual pleasures."³⁴ In no way did Brown view sexual objectification as a negative aspect but embraced it as a part of being a woman. "When feminists tell me that *Cosmo* is making sex objects out of women, I say bravo," she argues: "I think it's important to be valued as a sex object just as I think it's also important to be able to work, to have equal rights and abortion reform."³⁵

Helen Gurley Brown and Hugh Hefner both sell a consumer based lifestyle in their popular publications focused on individuality centered on concepts of a better life through consumption and embracing their own sexuality. The power of the consumer not only affords both men and women ample choices surrounding product purchases but parallels these purchases with lifestyle choices based on the image each person chooses to represent. The new burst of the American consumption culture became an open market democracy that reinforced equality in the ability to make choices. In many ways

³³ Scanlon, *Bad Girls Go Everywhere*, 168-174.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

³⁵ Joan Sutton, "That Cosmo Girl a Few Years Later," *Toronto Sun*, December 14, 1976, 99.

consumer culture reinforced the autonomy women were feeling during this time, and alternate lifestyle choices gave women options that were not afforded to them previously.

It has been suggested that the restrictive inconsistency of the 1950s caused women to rebel against these imposed norms with their new found exposure to different ideologies and new found awareness of self identities.³⁶ Even though the post-war period attempted to reinforce traditional roles for women the emergence of ideas surrounding sexual liberation had become embedded in the American psyche. American life was shifting into a consumer and consumption based society that focused more on personal gratification than ever before. These new choices for interaction took unspoken concepts of sexuality and made them part of everyday American life. In *Intimate Matters*, John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman see these more visible signs of sexuality as a major shift in how society’s focus had quickly changed from a frugal and traditional culture to one of more personal gratification: “One result was that the commercialization of sex, previously an underground, illicit phenomenon, moved somewhat into the open, as entrepreneurs created institutions that encouraged erotic encounters. In the process, working-class forms of sexual interaction, previously beyond the ken of middle class, were projected outward into society.”³⁷

The content of *Playboy*, *Sex and the Single Girl*, and *Cosmopolitan* were based around “the individual pursuit of happiness.”³⁸ Sexual edginess was seen as an important aspect of the individual supported by anthropological information that was being

³⁶ Breines, *Young, White and Miserable*, According to Breines, the conservative nature of gender roles after the war limited women’s potentials but the exposure to these new identities created new thought patterns. Breines suggests that “the exaggerated contradictions of the fifties, especially the narrowness of gender norms, meant that girls rebelled and explored. Camouflaged by the apparent and cheerful stability, they were attracted to various forms of differences and to new feminine lives.” Breines, 11.

³⁷ D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 172.

³⁸ James R. Peterson, *The Century of Sex: Playboy’s History of the Sexual Revolution: 1900-1999*, ed. Hugh M. Hefner (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 268.

presented to mainstream Americans. Another bestseller started off the trend of human sexuality in 1948 as a medical and researched look into the sexual lives of men. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* was very popular, and it brought to light many different startling facts about male sexuality. Alfred Kinsey was working at Indiana University when he was asked to create a course that would give students information about sexual biology and marriage. The course was immediately successful and Kinsey's findings propelled him to secure financial support from the National Research Council's Committee for Research in the Problems of Sex, which was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1947, Kinsey independently established the nonprofit organization, Institute for Sex Research. The findings in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* showed that men heavily participated in premarital sexually activity, dabbled in same sex encounters, and even participated in sex with animals.³⁹

Kinsey's next bestseller came out in 1953 and was titled *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. The most controversial aspects of his findings surrounded the female sexual experience, and involved homosexuality and masturbation. One of the most important findings was the fact that women wanted more out of their sexual lives than procreation.⁴⁰ This fact was enough validation for women to begin reevaluating their sexual experiences. With Hefner and Brown, these women found allies that backed up their want for a more overall fulfilling life that incorporated a healthy sexual attitude.

If Alfred Kinsey was the forerunner of this new line of sexual knowledge, Dr. William H. Masters and Mrs. Virginia E. Johnson's bestselling publication *Human Sexual Response* in 1966 brought women's sexuality to a new level of liberation. Their

³⁹ John Heidenry, *What Wild Ecstasy: The Rise and Fall of the Sexual Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 21.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

findings validated the female orgasm, and presented radical information that furthered the feminist movement. Masters and Johnson concluded that “the female orgasm is as real and identifiable a physiological entity as the male’s; it follows the same pattern of erection and detumescence of the clitoris, which may be seen as the female equivalent of the penis.”⁴¹ These findings also announced that the woman’s clitoral orgasm was independent, and the need for a male partner was not necessary in achieving sexual fulfillment; “moreover, women were shown to be not only independent of men, but capable of more and deeper orgasms than even the most potent of young men.”⁴² Statistical research in this popular best seller further opened the door for women to confirm their sexual autonomy. With medical research as a basis for their arguments, writers like Helen Gurley Brown sought to justify the sexual female, and allowed for an appropriation of sexual culture, that was never afforded to women beforehand in mainstream society.

The 1960s became a pivotal era for women’s sexual liberation not only by highlighting women’s sexuality in clinical terms, but by major advancements in medical research that provided the means for women to fully enjoy their sexual activity. Margaret Sanger, an American sex educator, birth control activist, and the founder of Planned Parenthood, teamed up with biologist, Dr. Gregory Pincus, and provided him with the grants to develop a contraceptive pill that allotted the female population freer access to sexual experimentation without the fear of impregnation. Finally, in 1960 the Food and Drug administration approved a birth control pill called Enovid. By the next year four hundred thousand American women were on “the pill,” and each year after that the

⁴¹ Susan Lydon, “The Politics of Orgasm,” *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Random House, 1970), 200.

⁴² Heidenry, *What Wild Ecstasy*, 29.

amount of women who were using the pill continued to multiply all over the world. U.S. Congresswoman Clare Booth Luce stated: “Modern woman is at last free as a man is free, to dispose of her own body, to earn her living, to pursue the improvement of her mind, to try a successful career.”⁴³ This marked the first time in history that women were able to free themselves from the potential of unwanted child births. The idea that sex was not purely for procreation became a dominant factor that tied sexual expression to women’s choices, and studies showed a dramatic increase in sexual intercourse.⁴⁴ Various popular publications, such as *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan*, printed articles promoting and justifying the pill and birth control as a medical advancement that enhanced the lives of Americans.

As the consumer culture came into full swing in the 1960s, and women generated more disposable income and furthered their sense of autonomy, the avenues of self expression were deeply connected to the ability to navigate society through a constructed presentation of the self based on the tools available. Even though more and more doors of opportunity opened for women’s advancement, there were still major ideological hurdles to overcome. Careerism was an important aspect of cultural and gender changes that allowed for new opportunities and ways of thought to infiltrate mass culture. The ability of the unmarried working man or woman to bring home a paycheck produced a consumer, whose ability to develop various identities based on images that spoke directly to the individual, were constructions based on elements of thought in society that afforded the most personal satisfaction. Purchasing power and sexuality were the two readily available tools that women were afforded in a gender biased culture. By being

⁴³ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁴ Peterson, *The Century of Sex*, 276.

able to construct an image of themselves through the use of socially acceptable popular culture artifacts women were able to transgress gender structures and challenge the dominant hegemonic position that placed them solely in domestic positions. The women of the 1960s adopted a negotiated code that allowed them to appropriate what they felt was needed in order to fulfill themselves as productive individuals in American society. This new appropriation encompassed aspects of sexuality, careers, and consumerism that had previously been only aspects of male social codes but could now be seen reinforced in popular cultural publications. The mass cultural acceptance of sexuality tied to consumerism became an important component to the changing sexual mores of the 1960s which promoted feminist liberation and set the stage for the furthering of women's social advancement.

Chapter 2: The Individual in American Society

As consumerism flourished in the 1950s, emerging outlets of media such as television and glossy magazines created popular culture images which became spokesmen and spokeswomen of this new era. The introduction of new magazine publications and best sellers allowed the American public easier access to ideologies that were being presented in mass culture. These publications presented an image of the American that encouraged people to reinvent themselves, and in doing so, challenged the place of men and women in society that had for so long fostered a division that separated the sexes into restrictive gender roles which did not focus on individual growth. Hugh Hefner's "The Playboy Philosophy," and Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl*, were major publications that infiltrated popular culture and represented an ideal that spoke to the American public through their own vision of individual identity that embraced careerism, consumerism, and sexuality into a working model with which everyday Americans could identify with and incorporate into their lives.

Hugh Marston Hefner was born April 9, 1926, in Chicago to a conservative Protestant family. The eldest son of Glenn and Grace Hefner, he grew up in a relatively prosperous household, and enjoyed extracurricular activities and popularity through high school. Even though Hugh Hefner grew up in a morally strict family, his mother especially embraced the kinds of modernity that were being presented in society during this changing time.

Grace Hefner, even though a product of social limitations imposed by the early-1900s, had more liberal views about the world that crossed over into her parenting skills.⁴⁵ Opposed to racial prejudice, influenced by popular psychology, and encouraging her sons to think for themselves were aspects of Grace's parenting that would later influence Hefner's ability to challenge the pre-set standards of life for men.⁴⁶ Grace was influenced by the popular psychology of the time period and like many women of her era turned to periodicals and magazines for "expert" advice on how to be a better parent. *Parents* magazine became a guide that Grace subscribed to that gave her advice on "everything from what movies were acceptable for children, sex education, emotional training, and hygiene habits."⁴⁷ Grace's progressive attitudes incorporated popular literature as a guideline for ways of living which challenged her Victorian attitude toward sexuality. Even though Grace felt embarrassed talking about sex, she subscribed to the advice given by *Parents* magazine, and sat her two sons down with an illustrated sexual reproduction book and explained the facts of life.⁴⁸ The impact of more modern principles, progressive ideologies, and the psychology of popular periodicals allowed Hefner to be exposed to concepts that helped shape his own views about life that were reiterated in his own *Playboy* magazine years later.

Hefner decided to work on his idea to create a men's magazine that was directed specifically at the urban male. With the help of family and friends, Hefner was able to

⁴⁵ Steven Watts, *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2008), 21-24.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, *Parents* magazine was the largest selling educational magazine of the time-period. The publication attempted to use social sciences in areas of education in order to create well adjusted individuals in modern society. The progressiveness of the magazine incorporated psychology and behaviorism through social science experts, which was reflected in Grace Hefner's approach to child rearing. The influence of popular psychology influenced re-workings of various aspects of culture including gender roles and sexuality, 21-27.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

raise \$8000 to subsidize his vision. *Playboy* emerged on the newsstands in December 1953 depicting the calendar photographs of actress Marilyn Monroe in a full color magazine spread. The magazine became an immediate success and exceeded the expectations of Hefner by selling over fifty-thousand copies. The success of the first issue allowed Hefner to further fine tune his publication into a sophisticated magazine that appealed to the young urban male who “sought relief from the stresses and strains of workaday life, and who felt more comfortable (or, perhaps more accurately, wanted to feel more comfortable) pursuing modern art, films, and foreign cuisine rather than wily trout, smoky campfires, and recalcitrant do-it-yourself projects.”⁴⁹

Playboy became a leading men’s publication which depicted a kind of lifestyle that marked an alternative to previous notions of American life, and was more in line with consumerism than most any other publication of its time. *Playboy* became a kind of “bible” that told its readers “what to wear, eat, drink, read, and drive, how to furnish their homes and listen to music, which nightclubs, restaurants, plays, and films to attend, what equipment to own and – endlessly – about bringing nubile women to bed.”⁵⁰ *Playboy* did not promote traditional masculinity but “also served to objectify masculinity through its incessant emphasis on the quintessentially American pastime, consumer self-improvement,” and “prodded male readers to scrutinize themselves, and potentially each other, with a self-consciousness usually reserved for women.”⁵¹

With the ongoing success of *Playboy*, Hefner’s rise to notoriety allowed him to further his concepts of what he considered the “good life,” hosting a television show

⁴⁹ Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 71.

⁵⁰ Thomas Weyr, *Reaching for Paradise: The Playboy Vision of America* (New York: Times Books, 1978), 55.

⁵¹ Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 6.

called *Playboy's Penthouse*, and purchasing the Playboy Mansion in 1959. Hefner opened up the first Playboy Club in 1960, which allowed everyday individuals entrée, for a fee, into the kind of lifestyle that was depicted in the magazine's glossy pages. The views Hefner presented in his magazine were ones that became more socially acceptable, as reflected in the acceptance and success of Hefner's ventures.

Even with *Playboy's* success there were parts of society that did not see merit in Hefner's emphasis on personal self interest. Critics attacked the sexual content and ideologies that were presented in the magazine.⁵² In response to this, Hefner began an editorial series in *Playboy*, called "The Playboy Philosophies," that spelled out to its readers just exactly what *Playboy* stood for and represented. "The Playboy Philosophy" was presented in the magazine in twenty-five installments from 1962 through 1966. Hefner cultivated a new vision of the modern man referencing the American rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." *Playboy's* monthly installments of Hefner's "The Playboy Philosophy" became the credo which defined men's roles as individuals and broke away from traditional standards. Hefner saw the traditional role of men as breadwinners to be stifling, and his concepts of "the good life" meant more freedoms for alternative lifestyle choices. Concepts of liberation in a decade that incorporated popular psychology and promoted personal growth saw men reject the concept of manhood as provider, and embrace *Playboy* as it promoted self-focused consumption and glorified male sexuality.⁵³ For Hefner, the focus of his writings promoted a fulfilling life based on the individual that broke away from pre-set notions of family obligation and focused on personal identity.

⁵² Peterson, *The Century of Sex*, 268.

⁵³ Gary Cross, *An All Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 185.

Hefner's rhetoric in "The Playboy Philosophy" focused on the rights of the individual and not just on male prerogatives. By focusing on the individual as its own entity, Hefner breaks from basing these rights on just male principles. Hefner states: "We know that we have always stressed – in our own way – our conviction of the importance of the individual in an increasingly standardized society, the privilege of all to think differently from one another and to promote new ideas, and the right to hoot irreverently at the herders of sacred cows and keepers of stultifying tradition and taboo."⁵⁴ Hefner goes on to stress "the individual remains the all important element in our society – the touchstone against which all else must be judged. The individual's very individuality – his right to look, think and act as differently from his fellows as he chooses (without, of course, interfering with the similar rights of others) – supplies the divergent, interacting components that produce progress."⁵⁵ For Hefner the rights of the individual are a true freedom and an aspect of society that shapes future ideologies. The focus on individualism breaks away from set gendered patterns that have regulated both men's and women's positions in previous generations and allows for self-discovery. Hefner notes, "too many people today live out their entire existence in a group, of a group and for a group – never attempting to explore their own individuality, never discovering who or what they are, or might be. Searching out one's own true identity and purpose, taking real pleasure in being a person, establishing a basis for true self-respect – these are the essence of living."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Hugh M. Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, Installment 1, December 1962, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-1>).

⁵⁵ Hugh M. Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, Installment 4, March 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-4>).

⁵⁶ Hugh M. Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, Installment 8, July 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-8>).

“The Playboy Philosophy” promoted well-paid work as a central element in the creation of the self. Hefner spells out his intent for *Playboy* to encompass all aspects of consumer society as sources of identity and personal fulfillment. Hefner defines his concepts of the “Playboy” as a middle class working man who embraces the new vision of consumerism and prosperity and attempts to define himself through these avenues:

He can be a sharp-minded young business executive, a worker in the arts, a university professor, an architect or engineer. He can be many things, providing he possesses a certain point of view. He must see life not as a vale of tears, but as a happy time; he must be an alert man, an aware man, a man of taste, a man sensitive to pleasure, a man who - without acquiring the stigma of the voluptuary of dilettante – can live life to the hilt. This is the sort of man we mean when we use the word *playboy*.⁵⁷

Hefner believes in the individual’s right to a career and highlights the positive aspects of what a work ethic can do for an individual and society. “Thus *Playboy* exists, in part, as a motivation for men to expend greater effort in their work, developing their capabilities further and climb higher on the ladder of success. This is obviously desirable in our competitive, free enterprise system, for only by each individual striving to do his best does the country itself progress and prosper.”⁵⁸ Hefner goes on to argue that this motivation to work harder not only benefits the individual in the acquisition of material comforts, but concludes that *Playboy* “is contributing to the economic growth and strength of the nation.”⁵⁹ A career then can become an opening for people to break from their social stations and raise themselves to a higher status. Hefner states: “Freedom, for us, is quite clearly more than the right of each individual to do and say what he wishes,

⁵⁷ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 1, December 1962, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-1>).

⁵⁸ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 2, January 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-2>).

⁵⁹ Ibid., (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-2>).

without fear or favor from the state or from society – it also includes opportunity.”⁶⁰

These opportunities for career are seen as viable avenues for a creation of the self that allows people the freedom to advance themselves. In line with much of the feminist discourse of the 1960s, Hefner highlights the same arguments made by feminists, such as Betty Friedan, who argued for the merits of fulfilling careers.

Hefner defends the individual’s rights for advancement through a capitalist society and sees any objection to finding fulfillment in this manner as stifling potential accomplishments. The guiding doctrines that Hefner reiterated were based around the principles of: “This above all, to thine own self be true, and thou canst not be false to any man,” and “A man’s reach should exceed his grasp, else what’s heaven for.”⁶¹ Hefner’s defense of personal success and achievement was a reaction to the criticism of the booming capitalist society of the 1950s and 1960s. Being successful for Hefner was not only beneficial to the self, but also to everyone. “If it were not for this, if man were not allowed to struggle and dream and accomplish wondrous things on his little planet, there would be no point to his existence here at all, and it would require a very strange and calloused God to play so pointless and cruel joke on all mankind.”⁶²

Consumerism was a major aspect of *Playboy*, which reinforced the consumer society in its pages of advertisements and products. Hefner acknowledges this stating: “We first became aware that *Playboy* was developing into something more than a magazine when readers began purchasing *Playboy* products in considerable quantities: everything from cufflinks, ties, sports shirts, tuxedos and bar accessories to playing

⁶⁰ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 13, December 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-13>).

⁶¹ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 2, January 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-2>).

⁶² Ibid., (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-2>).

cards, personalized matches and stickers for their car windows.”⁶³ Hefner defends the right of acquiring material possessions in saying:

No conflict exists between the pleasure a modern American finds in material things and his struggle to discover a new scientific truth, or evolve a new philosophy, or create a work of art. The good life, the full life, encompasses all of these – and all of them satisfy and spur a man on to do more, see more, know more, experience more, accomplish more. This is the real meaning, the purpose, the point of life itself: the continuing, upward striving and searching for the ultimate truth and beauty.⁶⁴

For Hefner the complete package was a person who not only enjoyed the pleasurable aspects of materialism, but also a person who was driven to live life to the fullest and grow as an individual by incorporating aspects of careerism and consumerism as part of their identity, concepts which appealed to both male and female genders without limiting them to preconceived gender roles.

The concepts of sex and sexuality were key to *Playboy* and Hefner goes into great detail in “The Playboy Philosophy” to look at why and how society has created such taboos surrounding concepts of the sexual self. Hefner states: “At the heart of most of the criticism of *Playboy’s* content, we find that ol’ devil sex....but we must confess at the onset that we do not consider sex either sacred or profane.”⁶⁵ Hefner acknowledges the advancements the sexual revolution made on society and says that: “Gone is much of the puritan prudishness and hypocrisy of the past. But far from being representatives of a moral decline, as some would like us to believe, we are in the process of acquiring a new moral maturity and honesty in which man’s body, mind and soul are in harmony rather

⁶³ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 1, December 1962, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-1>).

⁶⁴ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 3, February 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-3>).

⁶⁵ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 1, December 1962, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-1>).

than conflict.”⁶⁶ Hefner recognizes that society has not thought of sexuality as a positive correlation to the advancement of mankind, and publications did not highlight the merits of sex: “When the older magazines offer sex to their readers, it is usually in association with sickness, sin or sensationalism. In *Playboy*, sex is offered in the form of pretty girls and humor. One approach emphasizes the negative side of sex and the other, the positive. It seems obvious to us which approach is the healthy, the natural and the right one.”⁶⁷ For Hefner the complete human with all basic aspects of mind, body, soul and sexuality are what creates a healthy and productive individual in society and he distances himself from other publications which promote otherwise.

Hefner addresses how society views and punishes individuals it deems too sexually forward in representations of popular media, such as film and literature. The treatment of sexuality in the movies never allowed for any kind of sexual expression during the 1930s and 1940s, and Hefner goes on to explain how married couples were never portrayed in the same bed, that most sexual subjects pertaining to homosexuality, nymphomania, and masturbation could not even be mentioned, and as for women who were depicted participating in illicit affairs outside of matrimony, “the audience could be certain that before the final scene she would suffer the severest possible consequences.”⁶⁸

Hefner also considers how language affects the concepts of sex for the individual ; “Consider how limited are the socially acceptable words for sex. In addition to medical and technical terms, there are literally dozens of common English words to describe the

⁶⁶ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 3, February 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-3>).

⁶⁷ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 1, December 1962, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-1>).

⁶⁸ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 3, February 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-3>).

sexual parts of the human body and every form of sexual activity, but all of them are considered objectionable or obscene. It is virtually impossible to describe a pleasurable sexual experience in personal conversation without having to resort to unromantic medical terms or, alternatively, to words with such obscene connotations that they permeate the telling with prurience that may not have been present in the act itself.”⁶⁹ By dealing with how society deals with topics of sexuality in popular culture, Hefner reinforces *Playboy* as a way of breaking away from these strict and narrow representations of sexuality and opens up the possibility of sexuality being spoken about in a broader and less judgmental dialogue.

Hefner also acknowledges that during this time period there are parts of society that believe sex is purely for procreation purposes, but thanks to studies by Alfred Kinsey on the sexual behavior of men and women this belief system holds a kind of hypocritical ideal:

The sexual activity that we pompously preach about and protest against in public, we enthusiastically practice in private. We lie to one another about sex; and many of us undoubtedly lie to ourselves about sex. But we cannot forever escape the reality that a sexually hypocritical society is an unhealthy society that produces more than its share of perversion, neurosis, psychosis, unsuccessful marriage, divorce and suicide.⁷⁰

Hefner attempts to normalize sexuality by using statistical findings that back his arguments for sexual expression in his magazine, arguing that regardless of the backlash, sex is a major influence on people’s lives and a major aspect of it.

⁶⁹ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 7, June 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-7>).

⁷⁰ Hugh M. Hefner, “The Playboy Philosophy,” *Playboy*, Installment 8, July 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-8>).

Even though *Playboy* argues for a more liberal view of sexuality without limitations, Hefner's attitude towards sex is not a masculine force of just strictly sexual domination over the submissive female. Hefner argues that feelings and emotions are part of the equation that make sex a part of self discovery, but sex strictly for sexual reasons is not to be admonished: "This is not an endorsement of promiscuity or an argument favoring loveless sex – being a rather romantic fellow, ourself, we favor our sex mixed with emotion. But we recognize that sex without love exists; that it is not, in itself; evil; and that it may sometimes serve a definitely worthwhile end."⁷¹ Hefner does not advocate selfish sex in which the dynamic is completely self oriented, but argues that "only by remaining open, and vulnerable, can a person experience the full joy and satisfaction of human existence."⁷² Hefner represents in "The Playboy Philosophy" a reworking of more liberal sexual codes that allow people to develop and advance through life experiences which encompass sexuality as a basic aspect of being human, but sees every aspect of love and sexuality as part of a package that contributes to the emotional well being and personal growth of the individual.

Even though *Playboy* is directed to and for the male gender, Hefner's arguments for a positive correlation between the individual and sex cross into feminist aspects. "The Playboy Philosophy" elevates the position of women and their positive connection to sexuality by treating them also as individuals. Hefner defends *Playboy* in "The Playboy Philosophy" as uplifting the image of the sexual woman and placing her as a person and no longer as property:

Though we are sometimes accused of having a dehumanizing view of women, our concept actually offers the female a far more human

⁷¹ Ibid., (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-8>).

⁷² Ibid., (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-8>).

identity than she has had historically in the Western world. It is our religious tradition that tended to look upon woman as a depersonalized object, or possession, by continually associating her with its antagonism towards sex. Sometimes the emphasis has been placed upon the temptation to sin in womankind, and sometimes the emphasis has been placed upon feminine purity and chastity; but whether they were considered creatures of the Devil, or placed on a pedestal, their status in our antisexual society has always been of an object, rather than a human being.⁷³

Instead of being just another possession for men to consume, women were able to construct personal identity through individuality and the rejection of previous patriarchal ideology which supported male doctrines and confines of marriage. By presenting these kinds of images of sexuality in a popular publication, Hefner challenged pre-set notions of sexual morals and reworked them to see all aspects of the human as equally important; therefore, elevating the individual in every aspect.

Hugh Hefner found a female counterpart who echoed his sentiments about the power of the individual in Helen Gurley Brown. Brown wrote the bestseller *Sex and the Single Girl* in 1962, and in 1965 became editor of *Cosmopolitan*, a magazine for women. Helen Marie Gurley was born on February 18, 1922, in Green Forest, Arkansas, to Cleo and Ira Gurley. Cleo had chosen to marry Ira instead of her high school sweetheart, Leigh Bryan, because she felt Ira would offer her a more respectable and prosperous lifestyle than Bryan, a decision that Cleo would regret making later on in her life.⁷⁴ In 1932, Helen's father Ira was running for Secretary of State when he died in an elevator accident. Realizing that getting married for a second time would increase her family's financial stability, Cleo attempted to find her high school boyfriend Leigh Bryan. After much searching, Cleo found him and eventually they did marry. Helen Gurley Brown

⁷³ Hugh M. Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," *Playboy*, Installment 4, March 1963, (<http://www.playboy.com/magazine/the-playboy-philosophy-installment-4>).

⁷⁴ Scanlon, *Bad Girls Go Everywhere*, 2.

was cognizant of the financial difficulties her mother endured attempting to raise her, and her sister, Mary, and was not only aware of her family's class status but that Arkansas did not offer Helen the opportunities to live a more glamorous and prosperous lifestyle. Helen's mother Cleo was bitter and resentful of the sacrifices she made in order to provide for her family. She resented giving up her teaching career to be a housewife and raise children. In letters to Helen later on in her life, Cleo expressed her discontent writing, "You should realize that I am no longer the Gurley 'doormat' and that I have feelings, a little bit of pride and dignity left, even if Cave-man Gurley and his offspring did make chattel property and slave of me for many years."⁷⁵

Helen eventually understood her mother's deep discontent with her life, and even viewed her as a feminist, who was not satisfied with the traditional outlets of motherhood and wifehood. Other influences in Helen's early life taught her "focusing on the self provided not simply an alternative to sacrifice but a positive approach to life, one that facilitated rather than detracted from one's ability to assist others." One of Helen's teachers even taught her to "shake hands deliberately and firmly and not to worry that a strong handshake conflicted with appropriate practices of femininity."⁷⁶ The dichotomy of the conflicting messages women received during this time challenged Brown to forge a path that would afford her the ability to rise above the small town mentality and limitations that Brown hated so much.

Helen Gurley Brown was well aware of her looks as average, and referred to herself as a "mouseburger." Helen's mother Cleo always pushed her children to use their intellect and was proud of their academic accomplishments. For Helen this translated

⁷⁵ Ibid, 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.

into “the message that Helen had better work hard academically and use her brain because, after all, she could not rely on beauty to carry her through.”⁷⁷ Helen later came to realize that “success and power produce their own beauty.” Brown’s focus on the individual would put her at odds with other feminists of her time who believed that only as a group could women battle against oppression.⁷⁸

Brown’s focus on the self was a major catalyst for not getting married early on in her life. “She continued to view each man as someone to date, someone to have fun with, and someone whose better paying job could subsidize her pleasure, rather than as someone to settle down with in a marriage that she could predict would most likely remain monogamous for her but not for him.”⁷⁹ Helen Gurley Brown sees marriage as a social concept imposed on women who have no choices stating:

I could never bring myself to marry just to get married. If I had, I would have missed a great deal of misery along the way, no doubt, but also a great deal of fun. I think marriage is insurance for the worst years of your life. During the best years you don’t need a husband.”⁵¹

Brown saw the limitations imposed on women of her time and realized that in order to advance herself personally and financially it was much more realistic to “advocate working the system rather than changing it, manipulating the rules men wrote rather than attempting to rewrite the rules altogether.”⁸⁰

Helen Gurley Brown’s *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) became one of the first bestselling publications that highlighted the joys of being single and the satisfaction that a working career could provide women. Brown was a fresh voice who touted the modern

⁷⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 30.

single girl as a vehicle of transforming previous gender stereotypes by encouraging women to embrace many of the same concepts Hefner promoted for men in “The Playboy Philosophy.” The focus of Brown’s concepts, bettering single women’s lives and using consumerism and sexuality to do it, were subjects not previously addressed in popular culture. Brown’s approach incorporated both consumerism and sexual liberation as a means of change and self fulfillment that was more in line with Hefner’s ideologies than those of the second wave feminist movement. As Brown saw it, work was an important avenue that allowed women a chance to explore their identities and challenge the pre-set notions of women’s roles in the domestic sphere. Unlike previous publications, such as a group of popular magazines directed at married women who were homemakers, collectively known as the Seven Sisters, Brown saw the concept of “career girls” as a way for single women to be granted autonomy. “A single woman is known by what she does rather than by whom she belongs to.”⁸¹ For Brown, a job could give women respectability and a sense of self outside of her connection to marriage. “While you’re waiting to marry, or if you never marry a job can be your love, your happy pill, your means of finding out what you can do, your play pen, your family, your entree to a good social life, men and money, the most reliable escape from loneliness (when one more romance goes pfft), and your means of participating, not having your nose pressed to the glass.”⁸²

Feminist Betty Friedan who was writing *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) viewed careers as a centrally important aspect of the female self much like Brown. Unlike

⁸¹ Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl*, 89.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 90.

Friedan, Helen Gurley Brown saw educated career women as “sexy,” and the view that men preferred docile, uneducated women as a myth:

I needn't remind you, career girls are sexy. A man likes to sleep with a brainy girl. She's a challenge. If he makes good with her, he figures he must be good himself. Some men are supposed to prefer weak-headed women. I never met one who did. Not ever in my life!⁸³

Helen Gurley Brown's observation of men's approval seeking actually subverts the preexisting notions of patriarchy because it emphasizes men basing their self worth on female acceptance. For Brown, the career girl not only is able to infiltrate her way into the male dominated career field but is not considered unfeminine and uses her mind to advance herself professionally and also sexually. Brown states that:

She is engaging because she lives by her wits. She supports herself. She has to sharpen her personality and mental resources to a glitter in order to survive in a competitive world and the sharpening looks good. Economically she is a dream. She is not a parasite, a dependent, a scrounger, a sponger or a bum. She is a giver, not a taker, a winner not a loser.⁸⁴

Helen Gurley Brown sees careers as uplifting and empowering. Careers are a way for women to define who they are based on personal accomplishment instead of primarily as mothers or wives. In Brown's chapter “Nine to Five” she highlights women's reasons for wanting or not wanting a career and gives ample advice on how to switch careers, whom to work for, how to earn the benefits of raises, hard work and doing everything you can in order to advance yourself. A job “gives a single woman something to be” and unlike a married woman, the single woman can be known as someone outside of the domestic sphere.⁸⁵ Brown also argues that:

⁸³ Ibid., 103.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 89.

A job gives you respectability. A single woman is still regarded in some suburban living rooms as not quite decent. Just try that charge on a lady at the New York Stock Exchange. The better your job the better your standing as a single woman.⁸⁶

Brown goes on to highlight the successes of women who have made a mark in the business world, reinforcing the potential opportunities that women can strive for and obtain. Women such as Joan Harrison, a TV and movie producer who started out as Alfred Hitchcock's secretary; Madelyn Martin, a co-writer of *I Love Lucy*; and Rose Marie Reid, an American swimsuit designer, are among a few career women whom Brown gives credit to for making it in a male dominated business world. For Brown, women's advancement involved working within the established system, and in most cases exploiting feminine sexuality to get there. Brown was well aware of the limitations imposed by society on women's potential advancements and the diary she kept on her dating experiences acknowledged, "how she, like many other women of her generation, remained underpaid in the workplace and therefore vulnerable to the dictates of men's wallets, regardless of their accomplishments."⁸⁷

Both Hugh Hefner and Helen Gurley Brown embraced the period's focus on consumerism as a vehicle of transformation and a means of advancement. Their messages tied individualism and consumerism to sexual liberation, which contrasted with previous parameters of behavior for men and women. Instead of embracing the second wave feminist movement and attempting to overthrow the patriarchal system, Brown chose to work within the existing structure because it provided a more realistic means for the everyday girl to get ahead. In her view, Brown felt that women and men were equal

⁸⁶ Ibid., 90.

⁸⁷ Scanlon, *Bad Girls Go Everywhere*, 35.

in every right and the access to sexual and economic freedom was something attainable for women through consumerism.⁸⁸

Helen Gurley Brown saw acquiring material possessions as a means of self advancement and dedicates chapters in *Sex and the Single Girl* to money, wardrobe, cosmetics, and the single woman's apartment. It is her belief that women acquire these goods to better themselves and not because men tell them to. How a woman looks and preference of clothing are personally her choices. Brown asks her readers:

But how about men? Shouldn't you dress to please them? One of the best ways not to, in my opinion, is to let them get into the act. Why is it assumed just because a man is a man he knows what you should wear?⁸⁹

Brown's brand of liberation intertwines sexuality and consumerism as the sought after image of the new working class single girl.

In order to work around imposed career advancement limitations Brown saw nothing wrong with manipulating men with feminine sexuality to get ahead. Brown encouraged women to accept gifts and never to go "Dutch" on meals with men.⁹⁰ For Brown a woman didn't have to be a beauty queen, she just had to have enough pride in herself and her appearance and use consumerism as a means of self-transformation. By enhancing her appearance on the outside she would maximize her inner beauty, which for Brown was what really counted.⁹¹ Brown dedicates a chapter on "Kisses and Make-up" to show women how cosmetics, and dress, can change one's personality and gives advice on how to incorporate this brand of beautification into their lives.

⁸⁸ Ibid., xi-xii.

⁸⁹ Brown, *Sex and the Single Girl*, 186.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 111-115.

⁹¹ Ibid., 203-205.

Brown and Hefner would argue that the ability of the consumer to make personal choices is still better than no choice at all. For both Hefner and Brown the choices offered to individuals in the market create a sense of identity that can give them choices to recreate themselves into whatever he or she chooses and any limitations in the potential for advancement and knowledge stifled individuality. For Helen Gurley Brown's vision of women's liberation, the ability to make individual choices based on personal prerogatives was a key element that incorporated sexuality and consumerism and opened doors that were previously sealed to women's advancement. If these choices were restricted, women's opportunity to find any satisfaction in a sexually fulfilling, economically independent lifestyle would be nonexistent.

For Brown, "being sexy means you accept yourself as a woman...with all the functions of a woman" and that women should embrace all aspects of their biology because "a woman who feels all this is sexy. She wears it like a perfume."⁹² Brown regarded herself as an average looking woman but still subscribed to the idea that "sexy" was a state of mind:

Gorgeousness has little to do with sexuality either. (And mark this as one of my rare, unbiased appraisals of the advantages of beautiful women over plain ones!) The physiologically sexy woman, be she droop-shouldered, flat-chested, horse faced or bone-headed, will find somebody to be sexy with. She's got it. He'll find it.⁹³

Brown argues that every woman starts off sexy and that "she will be sexy all her life if nobody interferes. Unfortunately, in our society somebody nearly always interferes!"⁹⁴ For Brown: "Sex is a powerful weapon for a single woman in getting what she wants from life, i.e., a husband or steady male companion. Sex is a more important

⁹² Ibid., 66.

⁹³ Ibid., 66.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 66.

weapon to her than to a married woman who has other things going for her – like the law!”⁹⁵

Brown sees the female as sexy by accepting her own individuality as unique and an important aspect of her character. In the introduction, Brown states that “sex, as we have said, is enjoyed by the single women who participate not to please a man as might have been the case in olden times but to please themselves.”⁹⁶ Brown sees sexuality as a basic part of female individuality and to stifle it is to deny important aspects of the self that can tell an individual more about themselves and what it is they want out of life. This acceptance of the self for Brown translates into: “When you accept yourself, with all your foibles, you will be able to accept other people too. And they will be happier to be near you.”⁹⁷ This acceptance of differences also speaks to the acceptance of personal choices for both men and women that are relayed not only through Brown but also in Hefner’s writings. For Brown the importance of being single is tied to the individual who figures out for herself the best possible way of living for her own personal fulfillment: “The single years are very precious years because that’s when you have the time and personal freedom for adventure.”⁹⁸ The idea that being single allows you to explore various aspects of the self is a major component of the advice Brown dishes out to her readers. This concept of the individual is discovered only through life experiences that encompasses careerism, consumerism, and sexuality.

Individual identity was the main focus of both Hugh Hefner and Helen Gurley Brown in their advice and commentary to their readers. The discovery of this identity

⁹⁵ Ibid., 70.

⁹⁶ Ibid., xiii.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 258.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 264.

was tied into choices made by Americans pertaining to careerism, consumerism, and sexuality that prescribed a way of living that embraced personal pleasure and personal success. The individual then becomes responsible for his or her own betterment and these popular publications become the guiding principle that assists the reader in attaining their personal preferences by reinforcing options. Through individualism, the barriers that created gendered ideologies can be approached more pragmatically through a popular culture that does not strictly focus on male versus female ways of life. Both Hefner and Brown approach personal success as an attainable goal for men and women through creating their own meaningful experiences. Choices made about a person's career, their consumer choices, and their views on sexuality are all guided by individual needs and desires and both *Sex and the Single Girl* and "The Playboy Philosophy" become guidelines and social rebuttal that reflect how the individual has the right to attain these goals and work them into their own personal existence in order to obtain a fulfilling lifestyle.

Chapter 3: Glossy Representations of the American Individual

The post World War II period struggled with changing attitudes and gender structures, which challenged ideologies that had previously stifled sexual expression in popular culture. A main challenge to sexuality, which previously was viewed only in the context of marriage, came from American entrepreneurs “who extended the logic of consumer capitalism to the realm of sex.”⁹⁹ Popular publications focused on the individual connected careerism, consumerism, and sexuality as the path to self-fulfillment; these goals were attainable through subscriptions to the ideologies presented in these publications. *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan* highlighted the sexual self as integral to the complete individual. Both magazines saw the ability for individuals to make choices about all aspects of their lives as liberating; their expressive sexuality was connected to these choices.

Inherently *Playboy* was created as a magazine for the young urban male. The viewpoints and musings of editor Hugh Hefner were directed toward the male demographic. *Playboy* could even be said to be a personal escape for men in popular culture that before the 1950s did not include sex and sexuality as a main forum. As *Playboy* skyrocketed into popularity becoming the largest selling men’s magazine of all time in 1964, it became quite evident that Americans were ready to embrace new viewpoints about sexuality that previous to the 1950s were primarily censored and restrained by popular culture. *Playboy* became a starting point that shifted the acceptable

⁹⁹ D’Emilo and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 302.

and unacceptable standards of sexual behavior for both men and women in the most widely available form to the everyday person, the mass media.

Hugh Hefner's original concept of a men's magazine offered opinions that, regardless of being directed at the urban male, resonated with women of the 1950s and 1960s. In analyzing issues of *Playboy* from 1965, one can identify many aspects of the magazine that cross over to various feminist perspectives. The individual was seen as the main figure responsible for his or her own personal happiness and success. It can be argued that *Playboy* was much more than just a liberal men's magazine but an ideological seed that, once planted in the mass media, would reinforce concepts that challenged rules and codes surrounding not only men's place in life but, more importantly, in the context of feminism, and women's place in and out of the domestic sphere.

As reader input became an intrinsic part of the *Playboy* format, women readers began writing in and commenting on articles and forums, thereby announcing that the "magazine for men" was being perused and anticipated by the opposite sex. Hefner's promotion of the individual did not narrow his message to focus only on issues relevant to males. The fact that Hefner promoted individuality as the core basis of his ideology allowed both men and women to find meaningful advice on self-advancement there.

One aspect of the magazine that appealed to women as well as men was its array of style and sophisticated culture which elevated the magazine from purely a men's magazine featuring female pinups to a magazine that crossed over into social and personal subjects applicable to both men and women. *Playboy* created an upscale concept of how any individual can make the most of life. Many of the women who wrote to *Playboy* saw the magazine as sophisticated and enlightening, and the core concept of

individualism appealed to changing ideologies in the behavior and station of women during this time period.¹⁰⁰ For example, the January 1965 issue of *Playboy* was an anniversary issue which highlighted the best contributors to the magazine for the past twelve months. The categories focused on fiction, non-fiction, satire and humor. The highlighted writers have become some of the most widely published and renowned iconic figures in American culture: Roald Dahl, John Clellon Holmes, Jack Kerouac, Alex Haley, Ian Fleming, Ray Bradbury, Woody Allen, and Shel Silverstein to name but a few. Not only did their articles give literary credit to *Playboy*, they also made *Playboy* a more sophisticated and intellectual magazine whose appeal would include a wider demographic than just that of the young urban male.

The sophisticated presentation of *Playboy* gave it credibility and a sense of worldliness that allowed women to appreciate and respect the advice and articles presented in the magazine. One woman wrote from Toronto, Ontario, commenting on the January 1965 issue that a satirical expose' on Jewish motherhood without a doubt, "added to the noted wit and charm of *Playboy*."¹⁰¹ William Iversen's article *The Pious Pornographer Revisited*, featured in the September/October 1964 issues, addressed the sexual and erotic nature of women's magazines, which Iversen argued were more sexually preoccupied than men's magazines. Another female reader wrote to the February 1965 edition acknowledging and praising Iversen for his accurate and frank portrayal of women's magazines. She stated that, "I have yet to find anything as erotic in

¹⁰⁰ Pitzulo states: "While *Playboy* was officially a men's magazine, a female readership signaled many women's desire for an outlet to express a sophisticated, adult sexuality. Women could read their husbands *Playboy* and enjoy adult humor and topics. Moreover, it demonstrated that some women found the magazine-even with its blatant sexism-useful and interesting, or at least entertaining and mostly inoffensive." *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 27.

¹⁰¹ *Playboy*, January 1965, 19.

Playboy as you will find every month in the most respected ladies' magazines. However, I doubt if you could convince the ladies who cling so virtuously to their *Home Journal*, *McCall's*, etc."¹⁰² Both of these women saw *Playboy* as sophisticated and enlightening.

"The Playboy Forum" was a monthly installment of *Playboy* that focused specifically on the "interchange of ideas between reader and editor on subjects raised by 'the playboy philosophy.'"¹⁰³ The letters allowed readers to comment and critique Hefner's writings and get responses back to their statements and queries. In most cases, the topics of the forum dealt with the rights of the individual and the challenges of a society that attempted to curb personal expression and individualism. Both men and women wrote to this column expressing their opinions on "The Playboy Philosophy," which were featured in twenty-five installments from December 1962 until January 1966.

A female reader wrote in to the February 1965 forum praising Hugh Hefner and his magazine for their involvement in overcoming censorship and on Hefner's "liberal attitude toward sex relationships" to which she herself also adhered. She went on to state: "His comments and strong stand against all forms of censorship are even more courageous when one considers that he is involved in a money making venture and that legal fights (such as the Chicago 'obscenity' case) involve great expense, time, effort and jeopardy. I wish Hefner and his fine, fine magazine many years of health and continued excellence, as do I am sure, all friends of freedom."¹⁰⁴ The opinions expressed by this woman supported ideologies voiced in Hefner's writings and publication from a female perspective. She also commended the business and entrepreneurial struggle against imposed obscenity laws, reinforcing the opinion that freedom and the ability to make

¹⁰² *Playboy*, February 1965, 16.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁰⁴ *Playboy*, February 1965, 37.

personal choices were a commonality shared by both men and women and an important aspect of the American consumer.

In the magazine, the individual was seen as the most important aspect of a working society, and *Playboy* defended the rights of each individual to his or her thoughts and actions as the principal foundation of American life. Even when readers wrote in to express their opposing opinion regarding the liberal attitudes presented in the magazine, *Playboy* defended the individual's capacity for free thought as the all important piece of personal rights. One reader wrote to express her belief for individual freedom and tolerance but with opposition to the ultra liberal attitude about sex. She wrote, "I believe in freedom for every individual but to ask me to forgive, understand and accept things that are against my moral beliefs is something else."¹⁰⁵ The reader goes on to express her belief that sex is a sacred act that should not be degraded and questioned the moral values of those people who choose differently. *Playboy* replied that, "Hefner has never asked readers to 'associate with, discuss with, mingle with or sleep with' anyone. He doesn't advocate mass acceptance of a single morality – only tolerance of dissimilar views and standards of behavior."¹⁰⁶ Again, *Playboy* referred to the view that one single morality was not a reasonable or legitimate way of dealing with society. The main argument made in "The Playboy Philosophy" adhered to the belief that each individual had the freedom for personal choices in sexuality and, even if one's views were different than another's, there should still be an open mindedness to various perspectives. *Playboy* stated that in no way was the publication trying to impose a standard viewpoint on individuals but was only asking for more tolerance. In many ways

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 37.

this argument is the same argument made by feminists of the time period who were attempting to break down ideological normatives that had imposed limitations and gender bias. The viewpoint that each person has the right to think and act differently than others emphasizes the importance of individuality and *Playboy* stresses this by not imposing limitations on behavior or opinions.

Playboy's treatment of homosexuality was one of the most permissive and accepting forms of mass media which preceded the rise of the gay subculture. In the September 1964 issue of *Playboy* an article titled "Sex and the Military" prompted many readers to write to the February 1965 edition of *Playboy*. The article dealt with the availability (or lack thereof) of contraceptives for men and women in the military. This article also approached issues of homosexuality and the lack of tolerance in the military for any personnel involved in acts of homosexuality. The response of the magazine to readers continued to hold fast to the belief in tolerance for all and highlighted the fact that even though contraceptives were available for purchase by men in the military, "contraceptives are not and have never been issued to female personnel."¹⁰⁷ This comment marked an observation on social disagreement regarding female sexuality and that the individual was treated differently in this regard due to their gender. One female reader wrote in to commend *Playboy* for the editorial "on society's irrational and inhumane attitude toward sexuality."¹⁰⁸ She brought up the fact that the editorial came out at the same time the Walter Jenkins homosexual scandal broke out in Washington. Walter Jenkins served as Lyndon B. Johnson's top administrative assistant during his election and, due to an arrest pertaining to a homosexual act, he was forced to resign.

¹⁰⁷ *Playboy*, February 1965, 38.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

The female reader asked, “what sort of society do we live in that demands that such an action be taken against an individual for no other reason than that his personal sex life happens not to conform with our own?”¹⁰⁹ She also stated that “I feel sorry for any individual so victimized by his fellow citizens, but I pity this sick society that tries to function in a 20th Century world with a set of moral values predicated on ancient superstition rather than reason.”¹¹⁰ Homosexuality was a controversial topic that came into a more public view on June 27, 1969, with the raid and riots at Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Manhattan. The riots which lasted through the weekend became one of the pivotal markers of the start of the gay liberation social movement.¹¹¹ With the loosening of sexual mores in the 1960s, media was able to provide more coverage and information pertaining to homosexuality. Even though most of this information was steeped with negativity, media was able to convey more information about gay life to the public. “Magazines such as *Life* and *Look* printed photo essays of the gay subculture, alerting their audience to the concentration of homosexuals in cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.”¹¹² The rights for individual choices were main arguments of not only *Playboy* but also that of the readers who felt each person’s choices were valid options for fulfilling lifestyles.

There were no defining gender boundaries in the responses of the magazine to its readers. One woman wrote in ask how she could politely turn down a man’s sexual favors without offending him and losing a friendship. She argued that she had tried to explain there must be some mutual attraction or the sexual relationship will not work out.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹¹¹ D’Emilo and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 318.

¹¹² Ibid., 319.

Playboy responded to her by saying, “If a guy can’t accept your straight forward, levelheaded reason for not wanting to go to bed with him without aiming countercharges at you, then we think you’d be better off losing this kind of ‘friend.’”¹¹³ The sexually permissive ideology of *Playboy* did not reinforce the domination of men over women and did not question her choices for not wanting to participate in a sexual relationship with a man she does not favor.¹¹⁴ As a men’s magazine it also offered the male reader a bigger perspective on women’s choices.

The Playboy Advisor also reinforced a sense of morality and honor pertaining to relationships that did not seem to be indicative of a magazine strictly focused on the hedonistic pursuits of men.¹¹⁵ The advice column did not see women as commodities used for personal gain. One reader wrote that while overseas he met a German woman with whom he fell in love and to whom he proposed. The problem was that his ex fiancé back in the States was telling him to come back and her father would make sure to provide him with a lucrative career. The reader was torn between the prospect of an affluent life with ample money or a foreigner who would not be able to advance his career. *Playboy* wrote: “The fact that you describe this situation in such cold; cash-on-the-line terms leaves little doubt that you won’t allow a five figure annuity to slip through your fingers.”¹¹⁶ *Playboy* highlighted the reality that this reader viewed his German

¹¹³ *Playboy*, January 1965, 41.

¹¹⁴ Pitzulo states that “*Playboy*” was a place where women readers could find helpful, reliable advice particularly relevant to them. Women’s voices were regularly heard in the Advisor, and their inclusion made sense, because by 1970 *Playboy*’s female readership reached 25 percent.” *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 121.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Pitzulo goes on to say: “That relationship between publisher and reader translated into practical advice that condemned deception and infidelity, and insisted on respect for others. In addition, the columns supported sexual liberation for men and for women, as long as that expression did not violate the terms of romantic responsibility. That meant that *Playboy* denounced the double standard, and it promoted tolerance for difference, including homosexuality.” *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 106.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

fiancé as nothing more than a poor investment and that in turn trying to stay in a loveless marriage for financial opportunity would not make either party happy. Instead their advice to the reader was: “We suggest you solve your mating dilemma by breaking cleanly with both girls - and then waiting until you grow up. You’re obviously not ready for marriage.”¹¹⁷ By reinforcing the fact that this man was too immature to contemplate marriage the magazine broke from the traditional path of matrimony as commonplace. Money in this case could not be interchanged with love and mutual respect so therefore loses its power in decision making also breaking away from the stereotype that this magazine was based solely on the pursuits of pleasure forsaking any emotional and personal standards. *Playboy* set a standard of how men should act toward the opposite sex and did not reaffirm the sexist idea of women as strictly for pleasure or control but focused on concepts of mutual respect that applied to the individual.

By addressing sexuality in an informative and unbiased way, *Playboy* stressed that the individual was the only person who could determine what was best for their own self-advancement regardless of their gender. In the March 1965 edition of *Playboy*, Wardell Pomeroy, a colleague of Dr. Kinsey, wrote an article titled “What is Normal,” which focused on the sexual behavior of humans and attempted to demystify the boundaries that equate normal to sexuality. In the article Pomeroy addressed the concerns of people who wanted to understand what normal sexual behavior was. Through Pomeroy’s studies at the Institute for Sex Research he determined that there was no one response that summed up normal sexual behavior. Pomeroy wrote “Whether you are normal or not, whether you classify certain sexual behavior as normal or not, depends on how you define normal – and it is one of the most casually and blatantly misused

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 42.

words in the English language.”¹¹⁸ For Pomeroy the definition of normal sexual behavior was a personal one that was made up of personal experiences and viewpoints that would vary from person to person. Pomeroy stated “And with quite possibly no exceptions, each and every one of us has evolved his own tacit judgments of right and wrong (normal and abnormal) concerning the next fellow’s behavior, according to our own formative mores and our subsequent experiences and insights.”¹¹⁹ By presenting sexuality as a personal experience, Pomeroy further promoted acceptance of feminine sexuality as a part of the human experience. Pomeroy’s article reinforced an ungendered view on acceptable sexual behavior stating: “Our concern should be with individual wellbeing rather than with the irrelevant, illogical and psychologically damaging labeling of sexual behavior as normal or abnormal.”¹²⁰ Pomeroy reinforced the ideologies presented in *Playboy* which regard each person as responsible for their own well being regardless of their gender. The acceptance of varying sexual norms allowed women to break free from strict sexual codes that in the past did not allow for experimentation and self discovery. The permissive attitude towards sexuality created an even bigger space for feminism by taking away stigmas associated with immoral behavior that were tied to sexuality. In creating a level playing field, men and women could approach issues related to their lives by focusing on individual needs and avenues that worked to create a more fulfilled and productive human being without fear of social backlash.

Playboy’s emphasis on individual freedom of choice translated over into consumerism as an opportunity to make personal choices based on individual desires. The consumer aspect of *Playboy* was clearly reinforced by a multitude of advertisements

¹¹⁸ *Playboy*, March 1965, 97.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.

for merchandise. The product reinforcement not only stressed the importance of the individual to make personal decisions but it also encouraged the consumer aspect of a society that allowed the freedom to make these choices. A female reader wrote to compliment Hefner for his “The Playboy Philosophy” installments. She stated that “‘The Playboy Philosophy,’ interviews, and other articles are why I look forward each month to the arrival of my husband’s *Playboy* and why I let my own subscription to the *Ladies’ Home Journal* lapse.”¹²¹ This woman went on to give an argument for women’s readership of *Playboy* stating that, “Many *Playboy* readers aren’t interested in the nudes, because those readers are women. I think *Playboy*’s advertisers know this. If we would believe the financial experts, women in this country buy more men’s products for their men than men buy for themselves. When we women go Christmas shopping this year, many of us will go armed with gift suggestions found in *Playboy*’s advertisements.”¹²² This woman reader saw the correlation between the consumer aspect of the magazine and the informative content as a part of American life. The reality that women were also readers of the magazine contributed to the fact that the advertisements for merchandise were not only directed towards men but products geared for women were also advertised in *Playboy*. The fact that advertisers would spend money promoting products in a men’s magazine, directed towards women, shows the acceptable nature of the views and values of *Playboy*, and that these did cross over into mass culture - why else would big business waste its time addressing an audience that did not exist?

Advertisements made up a bulk of *Playboy* and these sales devices tended to stay in line with Hugh Hefner’s vision of the “good life” focusing on fine liquor, tobacco,

¹²¹ *Playboy*, January 1965, 47.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 47.

electronics, cars, fashion, literature, music, and film. The advertisements were not solely directed at the male demographic but also highlighted women's products. Judith Williamson's *Decoding Advertisements* explains the process of how advertisements produce meaning. She informs: "Advertisements are selling us something else besides consumer goods: in providing us with a structure in which we, and those goods, are interchangeable, they are selling us ourselves."¹²³ Williamson argues that the function of advertisements is to first of all create differences in products and use the cultural meaning of images to denote these differences. Differentiation also works to separate groups of people according to products that speak directly to their individuality. The vast array of women's products that were being advertised in *Playboy* specifically for women suggest that the readers of this magazine were not exclusively male; this, therefore, made the publication one in which a wider demographic could relate to and incorporate into their lives. Chanel, Coty, Lanvin, and a specially designed line by *Playboy* for women's perfume, jewelry, and nightshirts were major advertisements throughout various issues. These luxury items also represented the image of sophistication that *Playboy* incorporated throughout their sleek representation of urban living. The "good life" revolved around these luxuries and the images conveyed to the reader. If the urban middle class man could reinvent himself through the quality of life that *Playboy* attempted to project as an attainable goal, it created the same space for women to utilize and incorporate these symbols of status in their own lifestyles through viewership and ownership. The January 1965 issue of *Playboy* had multiple advertisements for the upcoming movie *Sex and the Single Girl* starring Tony Curtis and Natalie Wood. Not

¹²³ Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1978), 13.

only did *Playboy* promote the movie, which was loosely based on Helen Gurley Browns' life story, but it also highlighted a film generally geared toward women. The influence of women and their products infiltrated much of the advertising featured in *Playboy*, reinforcing their changing roles from strictly homemaker to a broader, worldlier counterpart: the *Playboy* male.

Women played an important role in how advertisements were conveyed to the reader in *Playboy*. Females were presented in comparable settings and equal to men, therefore reinforcing the unbiased opportunities that both women and men had to achieve individuality. Many of the promotional ads for liquor such as Old Hickory Bourbon, Grand Marnier, Smirnoff, and Canadian Club highlight both men and women enjoying an upper class lifestyle. Often, women and men were shown as equals enjoying the products advertised. By placing both men and women in non dominating positions, the advertisements worked to create an equal space for both male and female consumers relying on the individual's wants and desires to be the appeal as opposed to advertisements that set up strict gendered products that appealed strictly to only one sex. In the Winston cigarette ad a couple can be seen in different snapshots bowling together.¹²⁴ In all of the snapshots both the man and woman were represented as equals who enjoyed an activity that was gender free and therefore placed the man and woman in equal setting. In this way, the advertisement created a powerful space for women to be represented as individuals by normalizing equal participation in the American culture without challenging male or female codes.

The representation of women in *Playboy's* advertisements also reinforced the vision of glamour and sophistication that made up the ideology of *Playboy's* "the good

¹²⁴ *Playboy*, February 1965, 148.

life.” In some of the advertisements, women worked as motivational factors for buying certain products that represented the standards of a more refined lifestyle, making the represented women influential factors over buying power. In these cases, women used their sexuality as a factor in selling products that would enhance lifestyles and reflect a cultured individuality. In the Masterpiece pipe tobacco ad, Eva Gabor sat behind a man facing away from the viewer.¹²⁵ Eva Gabor directly looked to the viewer while she spoke to the man and asked, “Darling, have you discovered Masterpiece pipe tobacco? The most exciting men I know are smoking it!”¹²⁶ Not only can the viewer place himself in the chair facing away from the camera as the unidentified man but Eva Gabor also became the agent of persuasion for men to buy that brand of pipe tobacco due to her recognition as a sophisticated and cosmopolitan sex symbol and popular figure. She then became the representation of women over men who dictate the kinds of brands they buy since “the most interesting men” are the ones buying this product. Eva Gabor’s popularity as a star increased the value (and recognition) of the product, and men would, therefore, want to be interesting enough that Eva Gabor could be referring to them in such a familiar fashion as “Darling.” Eva Gabor’s stardom made her the workable referent in selling and connecting with the viewer a sense of individuality connected to an affluent lifestyle.

The authority of women’s influence over men’s buying power was reiterated in the advertisement for Pilot, a stereophonic console.¹²⁷ In the ad, a sophisticatedly dressed woman stands behind the advertised stereo console in an elegantly decorated room adorned with artwork and sculptures. The female figure was looking out towards the

¹²⁵ *Playboy*, January 1965, 2.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

reader while a darkly figured male played a large grand piano in the background. The ad stated that, “Composers’ wives, too, prefer Pilot.”¹²⁸ Again, this enables the viewer to position himself in the place of the shadowed piano player and reinforce the persuasive buying power of women who prefer one brand over another. The viewer is then left to reason that a refined composer whose wife must be of a high standard had optimal taste in electronic equipment. The composer’s wife then could be seen as a status symbol in which her opinion was as highly regarded as that of her husband and elevates her position as a worldly and knowledgeable individual. Not only did the woman cross over into a sphere of purchases generally targeted to male audiences, she then was an influence over which one was of the highest quality. These advertisements, as subtle as they may seem, convey the impact of women’s influence over consumer products that were targeted directly to men. By changing the power structure of why people purchased certain goods, the reader appropriated the message in the advertisements as a more common perspective which then allowed women access to a man’s world and his lifestyles and even made her an expert in which products were of the highest standards. By making women an agent of persuasion for high end products, readers correlate women as reliable voices for buyer purchases normalizing their sexuality and consumerism as important and consistent aspect of the self.

Comparing *Playboy* to the 1965 editions of editor Helen Gurley Brown’s *Cosmopolitan*, there are many similarities which focus on the importance of the individual and their consumption as a means of advancement and sexuality as a personal liberating choice. The ability for women to create their own lives using careerism and consumerism tied sexuality to these choices for personal advancement and allowed

¹²⁸ Ibid., 24.

women the opportunity to create their lives through the same avenues as men. The cultural implications sold through these magazines attributed the same kinds of desires to both sexes and allowed images, articles, and interviews to reinforce these choices as normal and progressive aspects of American culture.

Cosmopolitan became the contemporary counterpart of *Playboy* in the 1960s. In 1965, author Helen Gurley Brown took over *Cosmopolitan* and changed it to a magazine that was directed at the modern woman. The periodical focused on women's issues pertaining to self improvement, health, sex, fashion, celebrities, travel, careers, and lifestyles. The 1960s *Cosmopolitan* was not considered a feminist publication by mainstream standards. It is true that much of its content was still geared toward the single girl in pursuit of marriage or the married woman in pursuit of idyllic escape from the everyday but there are signs of ideological changes pertaining to feminism through the pursuit of careers and education, living lives as single women, having relationships outside of marriage, social acceptability of divorce, and activism. The fact that this magazine addressed issues that veer away from the socially structured feminine role of domesticity allowed various viewpoints to infiltrate mass culture and create new perspectives for women's lives, thus reinforcing the individual as the most important part of the American self. As a mass circulated publication, the everyday woman was allowed an entree into varying perspectives of how women lived and this information was more accessible to a wider range of potential readers. The focus on the individual was the main point of *Cosmopolitan* which allowed women to view their lives from the same prerogatives that men ascribed to in other publications such as *Playboy*.

Cosmopolitan focused on individuals and their needs as a main component of breaking down social barriers by reinforcing individuals rights as the rights of every human. In the January 1965 issue of *Cosmopolitan* one reader wrote to announce that even though she was born a Southerner in a racially charged community and taught that “the Negro is ‘beneath’ me,” she formed her own opinions and saw, “that there is only one race – the human one.”¹²⁹ Here the individual was their own entity which did not rely on whether the person was of the same race or sex but was strictly focused on the human and their personal needs. The declarations of the reader were a strong statement about the civil rights movement which proved to be a socially changing force in America during the 1960s and was tied to the emerging feminist movement of the time.

Inequalities and barriers were breaking down in areas of race, gender, and sexuality which brought forth new ideas and ways of life that were not afforded to social groups in previous eras. The argument for individual equality transferred into all aspects of the self and did not focus on set social acceptance of some norms but as universal acceptance of all individualities.

The career woman was a major topic presented in many articles throughout *Cosmopolitan*. The magazine focused on the ability of women to break free from domesticated positions and forge lives that reflected the individual’s desires and wants to achieve fulfilling and meaningful lives. In every issue of *Cosmopolitan* between January 1965 and September 1965 there were full page advertisements for directories of schools, colleges, and camps. There were ample offerings for college prep courses, tutoring, military academies, and even writing careers. These tended to stay in line with careers that were deemed socially acceptable vocations for women during this time but, since the

¹²⁹ *Cosmopolitan*, January 1965, 8.

normative for women before the 1950s was predominantly geared toward domesticity (housewives and motherhood), the fact that there was the possibility of being a career woman illustrates a marker of changing ideologies.

As editor of *Cosmopolitan*, Helen Gurley Brown's voice spoke volumes about the advancement of the individual through career paths. After *Sex and the Single Girl*, Brown came out with *Sex and the Office* (1964) which highlighted potential careers for women as avenues to self fulfillment and opportunities for a wider array of possible lifestyle choices. *Sex and the Office* advocated the same kinds of advice that *Cosmopolitan* promoted in their articles pertaining to career advancement. In *Sex and the Office*, Brown suggested that careers can bring women a sense of well-being and individuality by stating:

Whether their job is good or bad, women in offices never have to search for their identity and wonder who they are. They know who they are and nobody lets them forget it. They are the bookkeeper, the secretary, the receptionist, the model, the actress, the nurse, the technician, the sales girl, the executive – and people need them and depend on them and reward them. I'm proud of being a career woman and would argue with my last wolverine's breath that a job gives a woman the best of all possible worlds.¹³⁰

By connecting a sense of identity to career opportunities Brown further reinforces her belief that careers give meaning to women's lives and can advance their status. *Sex and the Office* goes hand in hand with the advice given in *Cosmopolitan*.

Career was seen as a central element of individual identity which resonated as a means for change and advancement and which *Cosmopolitan* highlighted in its various articles and issues. The June 1965 issue of *Cosmopolitan* addressed the potential for women's advancement in its article "Job Hopping: It's In." The article was directed at

¹³⁰ Helen Gurley Brown, *Sex and the Office* (New York: Bernard Geis Associates, 1964), 280.

“promotion-minded” executives who use the availability of executive search firms to advance and move into better positions. These search firms were mainly directed towards men’s employment but as the article stated: “Job-hopping is not exclusively a male prerogative. Women executives do their share of moving about, especially in areas like fashion and retail buying.”¹³¹ The article stated that by 1975 women would make up “40 percent of the workforce” and would be competing with men for higher positions. Practical applications of assessing a current job in relation to the potential realities of a new job were addressed throughout the article. These applications of weighing job responsibilities, how a new job would affect home life, the reasons for wanting to change jobs, and the means of attaining a new position were all practical ideas addressed in the article which women, too, could use for their own advancement.

The January 1965 issue of *Cosmopolitan* had a special report by author Betty Friedan titled “Working Women 1965: The False Problems and the True.” Friedan addressed the issues facing women who battled for the opportunity to have “space age professions” but were still struggling with a “feminine backlash” for doing so. Friedan stated: “The feminine mystique – that obsolete image of women solely in terms of her sexual relation to man and never as a person in her own right – still keeps most women in America from choosing work that will develop their abilities and give them a real future.”¹³² Friedan argued that, “it causes women to denigrate themselves on the job and to acquiesce in the denigration of other women instead of joining each other to solve the problems that women must solve if they are to move freely into the larger world of professions and politics, arts and sciences, industry and education, not as freaks or

¹³¹ *Cosmopolitan*, June 1965, 56.

¹³² *Cosmopolitan*, January 1965, 40.

apologetic trespassers in a man's world, but as women with their own identities."¹³³

Throughout the article Friedan interviewed women in various vocations and wrote about their experiences in different professional fields. Many of the women whom she interviewed voiced the difficulties of being working women with families. One woman affirmed that she got "tired of the juggling" stating that, "I'm expected to be good on the job, it's what they pay me for, after all, and besides I want to be good at it. And I'm expected to be a good housewife and entertain graciously at all times for my husband's 'visiting firemen,' do all the shopping and prepare meals."¹³⁴ She went on to say that she gave up chances for professional advancement and conferences that would take her away from her family responsibilities and now regrets having made some of these sacrifices. By announcing the dissatisfaction that came with strict adherence to women's roles as mother and wife, trumping that of her own personal needs and self fulfillment, the reader illustrated the kinds of walls that stopped women from achieving a fuller existence.

Sexuality was another tool that women in the article used in order to advance themselves professionally. A female executive interviewed claimed that: "I use my feminine wiles, but not when I'm making executive decisions. I have more attention from men, and respect from men, and go out with more men, and enjoy them more than their own wives seem to, and probably more than I would if I were married."¹³⁵ In many ways this last interviewee adhered to the same kind of philosophy that Helen Gurley Brown related in both *Sex and the Single Girl* and *Sex and the Office*. This embracing of one's sexuality in combination with "using feminine wiles" in a world that favored men in business was for Brown a legitimate path toward success. The article not only

¹³³ Ibid., 40.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 42.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 45.

addressed the challenges facing the working woman and the bias against her but also showed that the possibilities for career advancement were achievable with or without feminine manipulation. The realities of career advancement were still a struggle for women in the 1960s and Friedan did not refute that these challenges existed but looked into ways of overcoming these obstacles. The interviewees expressed a view of equality between the sexes and argued that standing up for themselves and voicing their opinions had led to more fulfilling lives and respect from their colleagues, therefore effectively breaking down the barriers that in the past would have held them back from personal success.

In voicing various viewpoints about the realities of American life for women, *Cosmopolitan* also addressed changes in relationship dynamics and promoted liberated sexuality as viable avenues for personal discovery and growth. Whereas the former parameters for women were strictly adhered to – for example, virginity until marriage - the September 1965 edition of *Cosmopolitan* featured an article comparing “the affair” to marriage and gave multiple perspectives: a man living with a woman; a woman living with a lover; and the same woman living with a husband. Both the man and the woman who lived with opposite sex members outside of matrimony commented on the joys of communal living as a positive aspect but stressed the lack of permanence and security which marriage could afford. The plus side to living together was that if the relationship did not work out there was no need for messy divorce courts. Both also addressed the potential disapproval of family and friends to this kind of non permanent union but stated that, in time, others adjust to the individual’s choice of lifestyle. To the woman living with a lover, the concept of living together before marriage was a natural way for one to

assess whether the relationship could work out in the long run. She stated: “The whole substance of life with a lover is fragile, sweet but a little hollow, like a meringue. And any woman contemplating the long stodge of marriage would be quite well advised to have a go at the meringue first. For in this case, ideally, cake before the bread and butter is the best way around.”¹³⁶ *Cosmopolitan’s* approach toward a more permissible sexuality heralded in new ideological lifestyle choices that were not a clear choice for women previous to this generation. The concept of living together before marriage was not a part of mainstream culture, and as a mass mediated publication, *Cosmopolitan* brought to light the realities in which mass culture was participating during this time as a normative part of American life, therefore challenging the preconceived notions about normal standards of living for women.

Cosmopolitan’s July 1965 issue addressed divorce as an openly acceptable and at times needed choice for couples who were in unsatisfying marriages. The magazine addressed a topic that in the past had carried with it social stigmas and shame.

Cosmopolitan viewed divorce as a personal choice that worked to ensure the individual was cared for and placed in an environment that allowed one to reach for the most fulfilling kind of relationship possible. The article addressed the reproach of divorce stating in the opening paragraph that: “Divorce is not a crime; on the contrary, it is almost absurdly legal. The lengths to which the divorce seeker must go to comply with the law would be funny except that the whole process is calculated to make him feel guilty.”¹³⁷

The realities of social ostracization for the divorcée (and divorcé) were a realistic problem that the writer felt was an unnecessary and stifling element of society stating, “I

¹³⁶ *Cosmopolitan*, September 1965, 42.

¹³⁷ *Cosmopolitan*, July 1965, 24.

think it is high time somebody said out loud that divorce is not, in and of itself, a disaster. It can be a responsible act adult, intelligent, constructive. It can be a healing thing, socially and personally.”¹³⁸ The writer went on to describe the questions, thoughts and ideas pertaining to divorce that people seeking this option could ponder and weigh against one another such as: the resistance to and fear of change; taking things slowly and trying separation first; the joys of work as an escape, and a way to extrapolate some independence into their lives: and the positive aspects of divorce for the self. An eighty-five year old woman who divorced at seventy said that “I learned something: Divorce is democratic. It makes no distinctions as to age. It gives the human person dignity and the chance to correct his mistakes.”¹³⁹ The author commented on the fact that this woman used “dignity” in relation to divorce, an uncommon association due to the shame that divorce placed on the individual by society. By voicing positive opinions about divorce, which had not been standard in society, *Cosmopolitan* was able to announce new, acceptable standards of behavior through a mass mediated publication that was accessible to the everyday woman. Changing the socially accepted standards of living created a space for newly emerging ideas to become more popular and, in doing so, broke down barriers that trapped women in situations which rendered them unable to advance and become active agents of society.

Cosmopolitan approached consumerism as a means of female social advancement in the same fashion that *Playboy* did by highlighting the benefits of living “the good life.” Much of *Cosmopolitan*’s content revolved around matters of beautification and style but addressed these topics in regard to working women and single females instead of

¹³⁸ Ibid., 24.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 25.

predominantly mothers and wives. The focus on life's finer things prescribed an attainable reality for modern women who were now mindful of alternative choices based on how they chose to live their lives, and they knew which sectors of American society could lead them to these choices. Consumerism was an important segment of the evolving female and the fresh products revolved around her new found self satisfaction and enhancement.

A two part editorial in the July and August 1965 *Cosmopolitans* finds the writers emphasizing the joys of being single and traveling. The article's title "Travel Single...It's the Most!" expressed single travel as an exciting and sought after excursion that could bring fulfillment. It addressed the single female as a progressive and forward thinking individual: "The traveler is active. Sometimes her derring-do has been acquired by the confidence that comes from travel experience, but just as often she has been born with the need to make things happen to her."¹⁴⁰ This "need to make things happen to her" could cross over into reasons for choosing to break the social strictures of acceptable behavior for females and find alternative routes of personal satisfaction. Traveling involves a process of exploration and consumerism that promotes personal development through the consumption of foreign destinations: varying traditions, social codes, and mores that could give single women diverse perspectives on similarities and dissimilarities of places in comparison to the standards of America and, in turn, her own ideological belief system. The article advised single women to become informed about the places to which she chose to travel, to accept themselves as their only company at times, and to become adjusted to the solitude. By traveling alone, a woman could indulge herself in the cuisine, art, and products offered by an exotic location and benefit from becoming more

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 26.

worldly and appreciative of different points of views and customs. By advising women to be open to different opportunities, *Cosmopolitan* worked as an agent of ideological transformation which represents a broadening and maturing of a women's self identity.

The advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* reinforced consumerism as a means of individual choice which worked to enhance and promote a lifestyle that reflected the opportunities for self advancement. Travel was a concept tied to much of the information presented in *Cosmopolitan*. The idea of travel engaged experiencing various facets of the self and also served as a vehicle to transforming individual identities which embraced consumerism and sexuality. The June 1965 *Cosmopolitan* presented an advertisement for Lucien LeLong's perfume Indiscret in which an attractive, sensually dressed single woman is sitting at a Parisian cafe drinking a cocktail and touching a bottle of the perfume.¹⁴¹ The ad stated that, "ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN..." announcing that the possibilities afforded to the reader were endless and the perfume itself becomes a kind of currency that "is able literally to buy status in the external world."¹⁴² In this case the perfume's exchange-value could buy options, possibilities, excitement, romance, and adventure. These concepts in themselves presented an alternative to options that were afforded to women before this era and gave the viewer the sense that new opportunities for self expression and development, while maintaining a sexually charged persona, were viable opportunities which could lead to new exciting possibilities. These potential happenings could range from the varying stands *Cosmopolitan* took on the lives of women to the now broad options a woman had to choose from when contemplating decisions regarding any part of culture which could enrich her life.

¹⁴¹ *Cosmopolitan*, June 1965, 41.

¹⁴² Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*, 38.

Cosmopolitan used the new vision of the modern woman to reinforce the concept of individuality as the most important side of the female self by contrasting this new version with older ideological representations of women. In contrasting these two visions *Cosmopolitan* announced that the new woman was an individual who had changed and found a way to incorporate herself into this new consumer based society by utilizing the products available to her. An advertisement in the September 1965 issue of *Cosmopolitan* for women's Enna Jettick shoes announced the arrival of a new kind of woman in society. In the advertisement there were two different figures of women's lower torsos standing back to back highlighting the style, dress, and footwear of both of these women. The figure on the left juxtaposes an older model of the matriarchal female dressed in dark colors, dark stockings, and sensible shoes with an updated version of the modern woman of the 1960s on the right side dressed in a shorter skirt, nude stockings, and updated heels.¹⁴³ The advertisement read "women have changed so have Enna Jetticks."¹⁴⁴ The connection to the image stems from the newly emerging female and associated women with a more modern perception of themselves, which came from ideologies outside the advertisement to which women could make a connection. The advertisement stated directly that "women have changed" therefore, the product is a reasonable choice for women who have also evolved into a more progressive version of themselves. Williamson states that: "We differentiate ourselves from other people by what we buy." And in doing so, "we become identified with the product that differentiates us; and this is a kind of totemism."¹⁴⁵ The fact that the advertisement only depicted the lower halves of women's torsos allowed the viewer to receive the

¹⁴³ *Cosmopolitan*, September 1965, 26.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁴⁵ Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*, 46.

advertisement as being directed at the subject “you” and places themselves in the advertisement as the woman who has “changed.” In turn the advertisement connected a particular type of woman to the product. By declaring women’s changing attitudes as a part of social evolution, the advertisement worked to make these changes a standard in popular culture. By reworking the roles and positions of women depicted in advertisements, culture was able to transgress over barriers that worked against women’s social development outside the domestic sphere and reinforced new patterns of thinking. These newly directed advertisement campaigns stressed the vision of modern thought patterns that emerged during the feminist movement of the 1960s and announced that, regardless of a person’s stand on the role of women in the world, there was no refuting that changes have occurred in society and were put into practice in popular culture.

Conclusion

Playboy articulated the image of the new consumer culture that emerged as an important aspect of American life after World War II and included sexuality as part of its discourse. *Playboy* constructed a vision of the American man that became part of the generational view in which the individual was the most important aspect of American culture and progress. The magazine differed in context because it broke away from concepts surrounding the daily grind of everyday life and matrimony and instead focused on the ability of personal growth and satisfaction based on individual preferences that tied together the concepts of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. *Playboy's* focus on concepts of "the good life" was the main ideological component of the magazine directed at men who wanted more out of life than just the humdrum of everyday living and ties to matrimony.

The philosophies presented in *Playboy* worked to present a new cultural vision of the individual which emerged in the women's movement of the 1960s. The image of gender roles had changed for both men and women, and the idea that sexuality was an important and natural desire for both genders competed with previous notions that sexual desire was typically male. *Playboy* became an avenue for a freer expression of sexual desires. The magazine itself challenged set gender roles and incorporated issues, events, stories and pictorials, and jokes and letters from readers that reinforced these new changing ideals.

Even though *Playboy* directed its message at men, it also had a social impact on women since it presented women as individuals having their own sexual drives. Women who modeled in *Playboy* were or became popular mainstream icons and these models considered their association with *Playboy* a privilege and a status symbol. The sexuality that *Playboy* represented addressed and redefined older patriarchal and misogynistic ideologies and representations of women. Taboos about nudity and sex were not commonplace in *Playboy*, and the “sex symbol” became a powerful image that did not represent a flaw in gender representation of women, but assisted in breaking down barriers that labeled promiscuous women as ‘sluts’ and ‘whores’ with no credibility. *Playboy’s* goal was to help individuals find happiness through one’s own way of life. The consumer aspect of *Playboy* assisted in presenting a formula for achieving these goals. This kind of thinking applies to concepts of feminism and the breaking of standardized norms and stereotypes.

Cosmopolitan addressed the new levels of freedom that women were achieving in the 1960s. Gender roles were being reconsidered since the 1950s, and women were now able to traverse into various areas of society outside of matrimony. Women had begun entering professional careers and areas that in the past had been strictly designated as male terrain. Concepts surrounding marriage and premarital sex also began changing during the 1960s. In view of these social changes *Cosmopolitan* echoed the same kinds of views that were being represented in *Playboy*. The individual’s innate needs became the standing point of the composition of the magazine. Women’s sexual needs were seen as an important aspect of the self and not looked at with the shame or guilt of the past. *Cosmopolitan* embraced the independent woman free of gender constraints and with new

found opportunities. Much like *Playboy*, *Cosmopolitan* made the woman consumer a vehicle of transformation, using purchasing power to designate a kind of freedom that allowed for advancement in all areas of life. The single girl and the career girl were touted as the new American women.

Hugh Hefner's "The Playboy Philosophy" (1962) defines his views of life based on individual identity marked by one's personal choices while seeking life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The rights of the individual are tied into various aspects of American life. One of the main goals of "The Playboy Philosophy" was to address the political issues that did not allow for a free expression of individuality. Through the laws and restrictions that were set in place by government and social doctrine, expressions of sexuality were not commonplace in popular culture, and were attacked by activists and critics. Even though Hefner seems like an unlikely ally to the feminist movement, in many ways the goals of his writings are in line with important aspects of feminist discourse. In order for the women's movement to further their cause and gain more independence, a new vision of individuality and personal freedom was needed. In the furthering of the women's movement, the rights of the individual, and the right to be in control of decisions made about the self, encapsulated the struggle that the feminist movement battled with in order to pass laws that allowed women control and choices over their own bodies.

Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) addressed the change in society's place for single women in the 1960s. The notion of women as individual entities true only to themselves and their sexual needs is the main focus of Brown's writings. Brown argued that representations of women had drastically changed over

time, and as the gender roles for women changed from solely family caregivers, they were freer to experience a more fulfilled and enriched life as sexually active within and outside the boundaries of matrimony. Brown's focus was based around the ability of women to choose freely the kinds of lifestyles they wanted. Unlike generations before, the focus of the 1960s was not on matrimonial success. Now the single girl and the career girl were addressed in popular culture without negative stigmas.

The power of the consumer became a defining force of individuality in the 1960s for Americans. The strength of the individual's identity connected the fact that American's purchasing power designated their identities: individuals could and did define themselves by their product choices. Consumer trends reflected the kind of personality one wanted to present by pairing their buying choices with a direct connection to personal preferences based on individuality. Both *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan* reinforced this trend as a means of advancement and self-fulfillment.

With key figures such as Hugh Hefner and Helen Gurley Brown, popular culture was affirmed in decisions to present identities through buying power. As America moved and grew in awareness out of the 1950s, it led society into the new changing views of the 1960s, which changed the interpretation of cultural images and artifacts. As concepts of sexuality were readdressed by mainstream society, new viewpoints and standards started filtering into how sex and sexuality were represented. Famous actresses and artists saw posing in *Playboy* as status symbols. Women were able to express themselves through their sexuality as a powerful symbol of their independence. This new appropriation encompassed aspects of careers, consumerism, and sexuality that had previously been only aspects of male social codes, but were now reinforced in mainstream magazines

such as *Cosmopolitan*. These publications can be seen as cultural artifacts that helped Americans define and highlight the independence and freedom of the individual's choices elevating their status in American society.

Second wave feminists have overlooked Hefner and Brown's contributions to women's liberation as being a part of the patriarchal system. One can argue that Hefner and Brown's brand of feminism was more attainable and realistic for women who were still struggling with a society that favored males for career advancement opportunities and stigmatized women for their expressive sexuality. Unlike second wave feminists, Hefner and Brown embraced sexual liberation as an important aspect of the individual.

Both *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan* are joint participants in the cultural vision of individuality. Their articles, advertisements, and editorial letters represent the vision of personal well being and satisfaction that both Helen Gurley Brown and Hugh Hefner advocated in their writings and magazine publications. Hefner and Brown stress the individual as the maker of their own realities and both see the individual's consumer and personal choices as the all important piece of a functioning and progressive America. In both cases sexuality is tied together as an integral part of the individual which cannot be separated but can only be embraced as part of the human existence. By reinforcing the importance of the individual both *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy* encourage personal choices surrounding careers, sexuality, and consumerism as vehicles of personal advancement which in turn works to break down past gendered positions for both men and women. Since individualism is the most important part of both magazines the person's sex is no longer a driving force limiting personal choice. An open acceptance of the individual crosses over narrow bridges that in the past have blocked individuals due to their sex,

social status, and even race. The previously gendered stations of both men and women were and are challenged by these publications. By making each person responsible for their own well being and chances for advancement, magazines like *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan* reinforce 'the American dream' by presenting their own formulas for achieving these goals.

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