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Friedan's Legacy and Today's Women's Movement

Americans cherish traditional images of the 1950s housewife, a woman who cooked, cleaned, cared for children, and always had a hot meal on the table for her husband when he returned from work. The problem with the ideal is that, despite many advances by women across the last several decades, this traditional image still has significant cultural power today. In the late-1950s and early-1960s, women started to fight against the pressure put upon them by the pervasiveness of such depictions. Betty Friedan's 1963 ground-breaking text *The Feminine Mystique* encouraged women to think beyond the confines of long-established traditional roles for women. The book had a powerful effect on the American woman and on the American family and we still see this impact today. Friedan's 1974 essay "An Open Letter to *True Men*" outlines the accomplishments of the women's movement that Friedan helped to inspire and speaks to the lingering resentment some men still felt in the mid-seventies for this movement. Friedan speaks in this essay to men's longing for a return to traditional roles for women, as the "liberated" woman, from a man's perspective, seems to not need men and is a competitor to men at home and at work. Yet, Friedan encourages both men and women to understand that increase in women's equality benefit both men *and* women. In the years since Friedan's '60s and '70s writing, women certainly have made

significant progress in the workplace and in other domains. Yet, despite Friedan's efforts, women today are still influenced, and perhaps limited, by traditional ideals of womanhood. Perhaps pulling against this progress are some groups of women, particularly those who themselves place considerable value in models of womanhood so dominant in the 1950s. [This paragraph is a bit long and could be condensed, but it does come full circle and ends with an arguable causal claim.]

Body par. 1: Summarize Friedan's "True Men" essay and her proposals regarding the need for men to adjust their attitudes. Quote from Friedan

Body Par. 2: Explanation of what Friedan was battling against. Explain prototypical '50s housewife archetype

Body par. 3: Present evidence of women's increasing accomplishments of equality in our century. Tie these back to Friedan. Include a transitional, quantifying term to signal a move to the counterpoint (such as "While . . ." or "Nevertheless . . ."). Move to describing some women's nostalgia for traditional roles. Offer evidence that some women embrace those traditional roles. What kind(s) of women do? Introduce first source that speaks to that conservatism or traditionalism.

Body par. 4: Introduce second source that addresses women's persisting inequality to men in the workplace. Tie back to original causal claim, that women

themselves might be contributing to this inequality because of their traditionalism.

Explain *why* some women today defer to or embrace traditionalism.

Body par. 5: Return to Friedan. Ventriloquize from her regarding *why* women today might be hemmed in by traditionalism and the larger cultural consequences of that.

Conclusion: Speak about issues continuing to face women today and in the future and how nostalgia, despite the advancement helped along by Friedan and the women's movement, affects women's progress. To achieve real progress, what must women do? To achieve real equality, how must American women respond to nostalgic images of the historical American woman, the housewife and mother? These questions must be answered in a conclusion.

Works Cited page