

A Rhetorical Critique of Emma Watson's UN Address: Can Pathos Bridge the Gender

Division Within Feminist Frameworks?

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Abstract

The *HeForShe* campaign, first proposed to the UGNA by Emma Watson in 2014, aims to address gender inequality by engaging men as active allies in the fight for women's rights. Since Watson's address on behalf of this campaign, many scholars have rhetorically critiqued her speech, in particular focusing on her employment of *ethos* and how it informs her approach to feminist rhetorical advocacy. This paper builds on these analyses by critiquing Watson's use of *pathos*, a topic that has received far less attention. Specifically, I aim to consider how successful she was in connecting with and encouraging the participation of her male target audience through three primary techniques: (1) the mental representation of her audience through *pathos*; (2) using *enthymemes* to develop rational yet emotionally compelling arguments; and, (3) developing collective *pathos* within her target audience to push them to engage with *HeForShe*. Through this critique, I argue that while Watson does a decent job emotionally connecting with her audience, her advocacy for gender unification as a strategy to combat inequality fails to take into account current feminist attitudes and actions. Consequently, this paper starts a discussion of how we might utilize Watson's rhetorical strategies in a post #MeToo era to redefine the boundaries of who can or should participate in feminist movement as well as the appropriate form(s) of such participation.

Key Words: *HeForShe*, Emma Watson, *Pathos*, Feminism, #MeToo

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meets annually from roughly September to December to discuss international issues and make proposals to the Security Council that aim to maintain security and peace around the world. The work of this assembly includes protecting human rights, providing humanitarian aid, supporting sustainable developments and climate action, and many other responsibilities (United Nations, n.d.-b). While in session, the UNGA organizes special events, many of which are hosted at the UN's New York headquarters, featuring topics of particular significance. For instance, one special event is the *16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence* campaign held at UN headquarters annually. This campaign, partnered with the UN's *UNiTE by 2030* initiative, focuses on gender inequality, specifically concerning violence against women, working to raise awareness of and action against this global issue (UN Women, 2023). Another recent event held in 2023 was *Building a Better Future through Music and the Arts*. This event gave a platform to performers to display their different art forms "to motivate civil society to take action on some of the world's most pressing problems" (United Nations, n.d.-a).

In 2014, the UNGA held a special event focused on women's rights. This choice was influenced by the significant uptick in violence against women (and awareness of this violence) that emerged during that year. Of particular importance was the major increase in campus sexual assault cases in the U.S. For instance, the Harvard University Police Department documented nearly double the number of reported rapes on campus from 2013 to 2014 (Duehren, 2015). Furthermore, Wolters and Smith (2020) highlighted the findings of a 2014 study that reports "more than 40% of the national sample of universities had not conducted a single investigation of sexual assault in the last 5 years". Keeping in mind that sexual misconduct is a chronically under-reported issue, we can consider how these institutional betrayals students faced after

coming forward in 2014 resulted in the escalation of the issue. In response to these trends and lack of institutional action, then-president Barack Obama established the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault in 2014 (Alter, 2014). This task force was implemented to help create resources for student sexual assault survivors such as trauma-informed training for school officials, a comprehensive sexual misconduct policy for schools to model, and creating stronger disciplinary systems for schools to roll out. As a result of these issues during 2014, the U.S. audience that Watson's speech targeted was already primed to listen to solutions for this rapidly growing problem.

Beyond the U.S., the world witnessed extreme violence against women in Chibok, Nigeria where 276 schoolgirls were kidnapped by the terrorist group Boko Haram. Many of these girls are still missing to this day, with those who managed to find their way home bringing back stories of the trauma, violence, and brutal assaults they endured (Cole, 2021). Another notable moment in 2014 occurred via an online movement called *My Stealthy Freedom*. What started as a Facebook page expanded to be an internationally recognized movement as it empowered Iranian women to post pictures of themselves without headscarves to protest the compulsory hijab laws in the Islamic Republic (My Stealthy Freedom, n.d.). While violence against women seemed to be increasing in 2014, the reality was and is that for many, it has always been a daily, multigenerational occurrence. It was only finally receiving more significant attention in the public sphere with the help of the digital affordances of social media. This was made evident through the attention that the two campaigns, #MyStealthyFreedom and #BringBackOurGirls (in response to the Chibok kidnappings), received on Twitter. The role that social media and hashtag campaigns played at this point aided in pushing women's rights and gender-based violence to the forefront of conversation for the UNGA during the 2014 session.

On September 21, 2014, the UNGA met for an event to hear what has become a famous speech on feminist social movement given by UN Women's Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson. Watson is of course known primarily for her role in the *Harry Potter* film series, but her public activism has received substantial attention as well. Watson, at the time only a recently appointed ambassador, utilized her speech to launch the *HeForShe* campaign (UN Women, n.d.-a).¹ This campaign "is a solidarity movement for gender equality that invites men and boys to act for a more equal world" (HeForShe, n.d.). As a result, the men who join *HeForShe* "aren't on the sidelines" but are rather placed at the forefront of the solution to gender inequality by working and supporting women throughout their community (HeForShe, n.d.). Watson's speech emphasized that everyone deserves to be free from oppressive labels, stereotypes, and systems, while also highlighting the critical role men play in ending gender inequality, thus echoing and amplifying the message of the *HeForShe* campaign.

Watson was by no means the first speaker to take the podium at the UNGA to discuss women and feminism. Since the 1950s, UN Women's Goodwill Ambassadors have lent their influence, voice, and services to programs that support a variety of women's needs worldwide. For example, Nicole Kidman, appointed in 2006, focused her efforts on supporting the UN's *Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence against Women* campaign which aims to raise awareness to gender-based violence and produce preventative actions that will one day eliminate it (UN Women, n.d.-b). Another well-known ambassador is Marta Vieira da Silva, a renowned Brazilian football player who uses her experience to help fight for women's equality and visibility in sports (UN Women, n.d.-c).

¹A UN Women's Goodwill Ambassador is a role assigned to different prominent figures from the cultural spheres of art, music, film, sport, and literature who lend their influence and volunteer services to help with key issues around the world. For more information, see <https://www.unwomen.org/en/partnerships/goodwill-ambassadors1>.

UN Women's Goodwill Ambassadors often rely on both *ethos*, via the credibility and influence attached to their name, and *pathos* to connect to their audiences on an emotional level while drawing support for a campaign's goal(s).² For instance, in 2012, Kidman created a video message that the UN played in the General Assembly Hall. In this message, she recounted her time in Haiti and meeting a little girl "who despite the terrible hurt and pain that had been inflicted on her was studying hard to fulfill her dream of becoming a pediatrician" (UN Women, 2012, 00:49-00:54). Drawing on the emotions of compassion and hope, Kidman argued that the efforts of the UN Trust Fund and "UNiTE" enable these women to turn their dreams into a reality. Thus, when Watson spoke at the UNGA, she was following in a long line of women ambassadors seeking to amplify the importance of gender equality using both her own *ethos* and the power of *pathos* to draw on her audience's emotional resources and effect change.

Previous Analyses of Watson's UN Address

Previous analyses of Watson's *HeForShe* address highlight her use of *ethos* and a traditional feminine rhetorical style, which emphasizes emotional appeals over strictly logical ones. In this section, I will summarize these critiques to provide context for how Watson's rhetoric has been interpreted, laying the foundation for my own analysis that specifically focuses on her use of *pathos*. To start, Julie Matos (2015) notes how a feminine rhetorical style allowed Watson to cultivate a more personal message that relied on "anecdotes and personal experiences to draw inductive structures of arguments" (p.13). In this way, she called on her audience to participate in achieving the *HeForShe* campaign goals. Matos (2015) also argued that Watson's definition of feminism was too simplistic to encapsulate the complexities of race and class in conjunction with sexism and, therefore, dismissed intersectional feminist thought from the

² The terms 'ethos' and 'pathos' originate from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where he discusses them as key components of persuasive discourse

conversation of equality. As a result of this, Matos (2015) noted how Watson disconnected herself from many potential audience members. It also highlighted how marginalized women are often not afforded the same privilege and platform as white women, like Watson, to speak on issues of gender inequality. In reflection of this critique, Matos (2015) argued, "White women rhetors and scholars must be reflexive about their place of privilege and how they use language to talk about women who are oppressed" (p.18). While speaking for others is a topic of contention for many, Alcoff (1991) noted that it is sometimes called for but must be done with care: "anyone who speaks for others should do so out of a concrete analysis of the particular power relations and discursive effects involved" (p. 24). Aligning this framework with Matos' (2015) critique, we can begin to recognize how Watson utilizes her credibility as a woman, yet in doing so, she fails to recognize the limitations of her positionality via her upper-class and racial status. This ultimately chips away at her overall *ethos* among non-white and poor women who may hold a more intersectional perspective on feminism.

Other scholars have addressed Watson's general efforts to engage in rhetorical advocacy and activism. For example, Watts and Chadwick (2019) analyzed how, when interacting with the public for specific campaigns, Watson utilizes her celebrity capital to persuade her audiences of her emotional authenticity, a key component of her efforts to craft herself as a spokesperson for feminist social movement writ large. While not an analysis specifically of the *HeForShe* speech, one example stated in their work is an online feminist book group and discussion forum called *Our Shared Shelf* (OSS), which Watson founded in 2016. Watts and Chadwick (2019) began to offer insight into how *ethos* is a primary tool Watson utilizes to cultivate her message for a new audience. Specifically, they note how "Watson's posts on the OSS forum itself constructed two types of claims that were challenging to reconcile: she drew on her status and connections as the

group's connected representative, while also positioning herself as an ordinary member of the group" (Watts and Chadwick, 2019, p.22). She succeeded in doing this in two ways. First, she positioned herself as an educated facilitator by proposing discussions, questions, and book recommendations to get the conversation started. Second, she relied on conversational language in her posts, such as "learning and reading with" co-participants to present herself as another member of the group (Watts and Chadwick, 2019, p.14). As a result, Watts and Chadwick (2019) argued that Watson's balance of celebrity status and online audience proximity allowed people to resonate with her rhetoric while legitimizing her position as UN Women's Goodwill Ambassador. Overall, Watson's use of *ethos* as a means of persuasion raises the issue of balancing both the authority that comes with her celebrity status and the authenticity she aims to have when addressing a problem.

While previous work has delved deeply into Watson's efforts to develop and deploy *ethos*, less attention has been given to her use of *pathos* and how this informs her particular approach to feminist rhetorical advocacy. Thus, this paper analyzes Watson's use of *pathos* in her 2014 UN address, especially her strategy to tap into the emotional resources of her primary intended audience—men—for this speech. The goal is to see how successful Watson was in connecting with and encouraging the participation of her male target audience on the *HeForShe* campaign's behalf. This next section begins by reviewing key contemporary accounts of *pathos* that shed light on Watson's rhetorical strategy in her speech. I follow this with an analysis of Watson's address focusing on two main components:(1) how she constructs and mentally represents the emotions of her male audience through distinct word choices and unifying pronouns; and, (2) her use of *enthymemes* to develop rational, yet emotionally driven, arguments as a representative of *HeForShe*. As I develop my analysis of Watson's use of *pathos*, I also

show how her rhetorical advocacy for gender unification as a strategy to combat inequality fails to align with contemporary feminist movement actions. Specifically, I focus on how men's engagement with current feminist movements, like #MeToo, has been problematic. Indeed, many scholars and activists have argued that men have recentered feminist issues onto themselves as a result of joining the conversation, thus undermining the central goals of the women's movement (Vigo, 2017; Jones et al, 2022). In conclusion, I address this disconnect and demonstrate how we might utilize Watson's rhetorical strategies to open the boundaries of who can or should participate in feminist movement as well as the appropriate form(s) of such participation.

Defining *Pathos*: Appealing to the Emotions and Beyond

Pathos has been at the heart of rhetorical production and critique since at least the 4th century B.C.E. when the concept was included by Aristotle among the three primary rhetorical proofs (350 BCE/1994). These "proofs" were large categories representing the methods of persuasion open to rhetors. The first of Aristotle's (350 BCE/1994) proofs, *ethos*, involves a speaker's ability to understand and convey character and goodness in various forms to effectively persuade the audience. The second, *logos*, features the ability to reason with and persuade your audience through rationale-based arguments. Aristotle's final proof, *pathos*, emphasizes a speaker's ability to understand their audience's emotions, specifically to know their causes when persuading an audience on a specific subject.

Aristotle's foundational work has since been further developed by multiple communication theorists whose work will help outline my own analysis of Watson's use of *pathos*. Specifically, I will focus on how Watson mentally represents her audience, builds their collective *pathos*, and incorporates *logos* into her otherwise emotional appeal. To start, Dan

Stoica (2019) investigated the idea of public relations being handled through the lens of artistic proofs. One of Stoica's key arguments was that *pathos* is audience-centered:

There is no discourse that could produce the same effect in any audience, but they say that there is a public for any discourse. In between these extremes, we have a common situation when a speaker has to persuade an audience and for that, they have to try to mentally represent as well as possible that particular audience.

(2019, p.80)

To successfully “mentally represent” an audience, the speaker needs to address and present themselves in a way that aligns with the goal of their message. For instance, if the goal is to unite, they may start a speech with “fellow compatriots” or use words like “we” or “us” to emphasize this connection further (Stoica, 2019, pp. 80-81). The way you present yourself through *pathos* is pivotal in making or breaking the connection your audience will have with you, the issue at hand, and the solution you're trying to guide them toward.

A recent article by Panigyrakis et al. (2020) further developed this idea of mentally representing your audience by focusing on social media marketing as a primary tool to build a connection between brand and self. Panigyrakis et al. (2020) argued that *pathos* occurs when consumers create a “self-brand” connection based on shared values or goals, evoking specific feelings and creating an overall “brand attachment” (p. 710). Considering this, a “consumers’ existing connection to the brand will influence the effect of social media marketing activities on brand attachment. This means that marketers should constantly invest in cultivating and developing their consumers’ self-brand connections” (Panigyrakis et al., 2020, p.711). This is an important consideration for my analysis of *HeForShe*'s current online presence as this factor is

pivotal in strengthening both the campaign's outreach and the level of self-brand connection supporters' experience.

Furthermore, Craig Waddell (1990) analyzed the role of *pathos* in a decision-making process. He looked at the interplay between *pathos* and *logos* to understand them as part of a unified rhetorical practice. One way he did this was by thinking of emotional appeals as *enthymemes*, both inviting the audience to connect with and participate in the process of message creation. In making this observation, Waddell (1990) applied Aristotle's definition of the *enthymeme* describing it as the use of unstated premises to co-construct an argument with an audience. This is one of the defining features of rhetoric as an art and is also an excellent way to get the audience involved in their own persuasion. Waddell (1990) then argued that the “*logos of pathos*” (p. 385) is wrapped up in a speaker's use of honest logic accomplished through enthymematic appeals, thus forming a rational foundation for an emotional argument. For instance, instead of using *logos* to deceive an audience, a speaker can instead consider what their audience values emotionally to determine the appropriate way to present their argument and persuade them into rational action. Waddell's (1990) discussion of using enthymemes in emotional appeals will support my critique of Watson's speech by analyzing whether she effectively employed this technique to appeal to her audience's values and guide them to action.

Additionally, Ioana Morosanu (2020) looked at the “collective *pathos*” (p. 94) within an audience and how a speaker can successfully acknowledge it:

An audience includes the cognitive and affective connections that unite its members, it represents the common background of experiences, but also their aspirations. Therefore, the speaker will consider, along with the individual *pathos*,

the collective *pathos* too, those collective affections and emotions that dominate the group. (Morosanu, 2020, p. 94)

To properly address either the positive or negative emotions that form collective *pathos*, both the speaker and audience must achieve certain steps. First, the audience must be aware of the interests and needs of their group, while at the same time, the speaker must understand these common points and rationally address them in a way the audience understands (Morosanu, 2020). One method Morosanu proposed was having the speaker focus on the right topics that will guide the collective audience to calm, practical action, instead of sending them into a panic. She exemplified this by comparing Biden's (March 12th, 2020) and Trump's (March 11th, 2020) speeches to the public addressing the pandemic. Specifically, she looked at how points of focus, specific word choice, and even information can affect the receptivity the audience has toward a speech. Using these examples, she noted how Trump's attempt to downplay the seriousness of COVID-19 ultimately confused the public and caused more panic than Biden's speech, which addressed the issue clearly and outlined necessary precautions. Morosanu's (2020) unique contributions to the idea of collective *pathos* are critical in my analysis of Watson's speech, as I outline how she addresses her audience's shared experience and emotions when aiming to inspire collective action on behalf of the *HeForShe* campaign.

While Aristotle brought the idea of *pathos* to the table, it is the work of contemporary scholars who have helped further the application and significance of this rhetorical tool. As a result, their work has helped form an overall concept of *pathos* that will guide my own critique of Watson's *HeForShe* address. *Pathos* is a rhetorical strategy that involves understanding, connecting to, and mentally representing your audience when aiming to persuade them (Stoica, 2019). It is a key tool that guides the decision-making process an audience goes through,

specifically when working towards a rational solution (Waddell, 1990). As a result, it's not only important to consider the complex ways logic intertwines itself with an emotional appeal but also the collective *pathos* of your audience when mentally representing them. Collective *pathos* is the guiding emotions an audience has based on shared experiences (Morosanu, 2020). To successfully employ *pathos* within an argument, a speaker must not only acknowledge these collective emotions but understand them in a way that influences the rationale of their argument. In doing so, the argument becomes something the audience not only understands logically but also something they can emotionally connect with and support going forward.

With these modern considerations of *pathos* laid out, I will now analyze Watson's use of this rhetorical tool in her UN speech. Specifically, I will discuss how she addressed her audience to mentally represent them (Stoica, 2019), how she used *enthymemes* to bring logic into her arguments and better embody the values of her audience to produce change (Waddell, 1990), and finally, how well she addressed the collective *pathos* of her audience through her choice in focusing on specific information, topics, and rational arguments (Morosanu, 2020). From this critique, I analyze how Watson's use of *pathos* was extremely successful in the short term. This is due to her unifying language, narrative-based reasoning, and overall male-centeredness which allowed her to build a bridge with men despite the negative criticism she received because of these tactics. However, beyond the short-term achievement of this speech, both Watson's use of *pathos* and the *HeForShe* campaign, in general, have struggled to maintain their connection and reach long-term goals of uniting men and women on issues within current feminist frameworks. There are two contributing factors as to why this may be, the first being Watson's surface-level discussion of men's involvement in and feelings toward feminism. The second is her lack of engagement with female feminists who oppose *HeForShe's* male-focused agenda. This has

unfortunately positioned Watson's campaign and speech at a distance from current feminist conversations and undermined their long-term effectiveness.

Pathos in Watson's 2014 Address to the UNGA

Mentally Representing the Audience

Watson began her address by naming high-ranking individuals in the general audience: "Your Excellencies. UN secretary-general. President of the General Assembly. Executive director of U.N. women and distinguished guests" (Watson, 2014, 00:54-01:06). While her initial greeting was undoubtedly formal, it provided the tone and foundation for Watson to discuss *HeForShe's* goals. But what's even more crucial to recognize is that nearly all of those she directly addressed, aside from the Executive Director of UN Women, were men. Watson continued to maintain respect in her greeting to the rest of the audience, many of whom were also men attending both in person and online via a live stream, by addressing them as distinguished. Watson's initial greeting was vital to her "mental representation" (Stoica, 2019) of the audience, as she showed her respect for the powerful positions both Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and General Assembly President Sam Kutesa held during the 69th session of the UNGA. She also directly challenged them to support her campaign through a kind of verbal accountability enacted when she called out their names. These two UN leaders had a major influence on the 2014 sessions; however, on a larger scale, they represented the UGNA overall which has had an historically disproportionate male-to-female ratio. The UN reports that as of 2021, only four women have been elected President of the UNGA in its 76 years, and only 24 of the 193 Member States represented currently have a woman Head of State or Government (2021). This is only grazing the surface of both the disproportionate male presence and power that was held in the UN during 2014, and it suggests why Watson's specific assessment of this imbalance was so crucial.

Watson also mentally represented her audience with the specific pronouns she used throughout the speech. While she did not shy away from using “I” pronouns when sharing her personal experiences of inequality, Watson shifted toward using unifying pronouns to acknowledge the ways men suffer as well, thus inviting them to play an equal role in putting an end to gender inequality. For instance, she stated,

How can we affect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feels welcome to participate in the conversation? Men. I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is your issue, too. (Watson, 2014, 06:43)

So many important methods of mental representation through *pathos* can be seen here, starting with her invitation for men to join women in the conversation of gender equality, instead of the two being pinned against one another in the search for social justice. She further solidified this union through her question of how “we” can affect change. She did not single out women or men. Instead, she leaned on these unifying words throughout the speech to back the purpose of *HeForShe* which faces inequality as everyone's issue. Watson (2014) continued this pattern by making claims such as: “If *we* stop defining each other by what *we* are not and start defining ourselves by who *we* are *we* can all be freer and this is what HeForShe is about. It's about freedom” (2014, 09:06); “*We* are struggling for a uniting word” (2014, 12:01). While these specific pronouns united the audience, they additionally put Watson in a position to mentally represent the men there as potential allies. In doing so, she thus made it clear that the men listening to her all had the power and character to help contribute to ending gender inequality through the *HeForShe* campaign. These tactics ultimately allowed Watson to align herself with one of *HeForShe*'s campaign goals: overcoming the divisions that sometimes undermine the participation of men in the feminist movement.

Co-Constructing Rationality Through *Enthymemes*

Emotions are sometimes not enough on their own to drive an argument home. Rather, a speaker must utilize several rhetorical devices at once to successfully persuade their audience. Considering this, Waddell (1990) argued that “the interaction between *logos* and *pathos* becomes clearer if we think of emotional appeals as *enthymemes*” (p. 390). Furthermore, Waddell (1990) added that an *enthymeme*, when used effectively, can be the “*logos of pathos*” as the speaker can better tap into an audience's emotions while pushing them toward change through the rational reconstruction of otherwise emotional appeals (p. 385). Thus, when an *enthymeme* is made up of ineffective or misconstrued rationality, the argument will ultimately fall apart as the audience is disinclined to help construct it.

Watson successfully applied numerous *enthymemes* in her speech, thus suturing *logos* and *pathos* together to craft powerful audience-centered appeals. One *enthymeme* Watson utilized in her speech relied on the major argument that like women, “Men don't have the benefits of equality, either. We don't often talk about men being imprisoned by gender stereotypes” (2014, 8:11-8:24). Working from the unstated but assumed claim that gender inequality is bad, Watson crafted her concluding argument that both men and women have a responsibility to be a part of the solution to this issue if we ever want change. Specifically, she stated:

When they [men] are free, things will change for women as a natural consequence. If men don't have to be aggressive in order to be accepted, women won't feel compelled to be submissive. If men don't have to control, women won't have to be controlled. (Watson, 2014, 8:26-8:48)

Using this *enthymeme*, Watson attempted to close the gap men might have felt towards the topic of feminism during this time as she made it apparent that feminism has (incorrectly) “become synonymous with man-hating,” an idea that needs to stop if we are to make any strides forward (2014, 1:59-2:02). Framing the tense relational dynamics through the lens of empathy provided men with a means to identify with *HeForShe*'s goal—to support, rather than villainize, them—for their involvement alongside women in feminist movement. For instance, Watson concluded her speech with “We are struggling for a uniting word but the good news is we have a uniting movement. It is called HeForShe.” (Watson, 2014, 11:59-12:11). Through this emotionally driven *enthymeme*, Watson successfully outlines how *HeForShe* allows space for both men and women to feel represented in the conversation of gender inequality.

While Watson's attempt to address inequality as an all-gender issue was admirable and can arguably be counted as a successful rhetorical appeal, she failed to highlight the depth of the inequality men experience beyond gender stereotypes. For instance, Watson connected stereotypes to the struggle men face with their mental health and lack of recognition in the private sphere of life. However, by ending the conversation there, Watson's evaluation of this inequality lacked a more in-depth analysis of the specific consequential outcomes of these stereotypes. If Watson were to spend time listing out the statistics of how many fathers lose custody battles compared to mothers, or how many silently suffer from mental health issues, then she may have strengthened the argument and audience connection that *HeForShe* aims to create. More so, as Morosanu (2020) pointed out, a truly successful *pathos* appeal involves inspiring collective action by addressing the seriousness of the issue and offering rational solutions. Watson's *pathos*-driven appeal by no means dismissed the seriousness of men's inequality, but it unfortunately failed to present direct rational solutions for men to combat it. For instance,

HeForShe's 2021 "Proven Solutions" report highlighted the growth that partnered corporations and universities, led by men, made in improving the number of women on their boards and company-wide (HeForShe, 2021). These were astronomical strides that align with the campaign goals, but none of these specific plans were mentioned in Watson's speech. Without this deeper analysis, Watson's target audience failed to fully emotionally connect to and follow her call to action in long-term ways.

Furthermore, a campaign based on men's involvement in feminism should maintain a higher focus on the attitude current feminists hold towards this idea (rather than simply waving off the opposing opinions as "man-hating"). At the time of Watson's speech, feminists seemed to be divided into two main beliefs regarding male involvement. The first is held by those who agree with Watson's calls for male inclusion into feminism. This view aligns with bell hooks' (2014) idea that the problem feminists face is not men, rather, it is the patriarchy and those who perpetuate this system of power regardless of their gender (2014). hooks (2014) deepens this claim by describing how the "patriarchy stripped men of certain rights, imposing on them a sexist masculine identity" in addition to a variety of class-based and racial stereotypes, showing that ideology rather than individual men is the problem (p. 68). Thus, it is possible for men to engage in pro-feminist action. The second is held by those who view men's involvement in feminist frameworks with suspicion. Ashe (2007), whose work analyzes the contemporary relationship between feminism and masculinity, points out how this suspicion sprouts from many arguments. A central claim is that male involvement often ends up appropriating feminist thought, leading them to lack commitment in the movement's politics and to instead engage in performative feminism (Ashe, 2007).

Considering this, I argue that Watson's rationale behind her argument may have produced short-term success as evidenced by gaining the support of the UNGA. However, in the long run, she failed to fully connect with her audience given that she did not convey enough reflexivity in her speech to address current feminist attitudes or specify actions *HeForShe* might use to challenge them. As a result, Watson's male-centered rhetoric could have been viewed by many as reinforcing patriarchal structures by placing the onus on men to help women only after first becoming free from oppressive stereotypes themselves. By positioning men as the central agents of change to gender inequality, Watson's speech risks further sidelining the intersectional experiences of women and undermining *HeForShe's* goal of gender unification.

Developing Collective *Pathos*

Despite the fact that many women attended her speech at the UN (many of whom were active members of the UN Women organization itself), Watson's target audience was men. As I pointed out early on, the first people Watson called out by name were both distinguished men who held influential positions within the UN. Judging from this, I would argue that the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, and the President of the General Assembly, Sam Kutesa, represented not only the UN's decisions but also the collective *pathos* that all men within this organization might have toward the topic of feminism. To tap into the collective *pathos* of this audience, Watson then focused on topics and issues within inequality that they would not only support but relate to themselves. This resulted in her claims of feminism as both a men's and women's issue, ultimately making an argument that *HeForShe* was fighting for gaining equality and human rights for all.

However, to properly critique Watson's connection to the collective *pathos* of men, I must first consider the social context both during the time of her speech and in the years

following it. Analyzing the feminist consciousness of men, Dupler (2010) found that the “strength of feminist self-identification for men was relatively low. Even when men hold gender egalitarian beliefs, they are unlikely to identify as feminist” (p.18). What’s more, Dupler (2010) noted that even men who claimed to support gender equality showed a disconnect between their ideology and action as they reported that they are less likely to act in an egalitarian fashion (for example calling out sexist jokes). Finally, Dupler (2010) proposed that negative stereotypes of feminists, much like the “man hater” definition Watson explored in her speech, could be the underlying reason for the disapproval of feminism as it further prevents men from wanting to adopt or contribute to this consciousness.

More recently, Ekelund (2021) expanded on Dupler’s exploration of this division in feminism through qualitative interviews with nine young, feminist men. According to Ekelund’s (2021) work, a primary contributor to this disconnect was the pedestal effect experienced by these men in which they are appreciated for surface-level feminist behaviors (i.e., wearing a feminist pin on a jacket) versus committing to being an ally via their tactics and actions. As a result, we see a lot of female feminists disregarding male inclusion in the movement as they come across as performative (i.e., participating to gain social capital), when doing the former and are ignored due to experiential differences when doing the latter (Ekelund, 2021). Considering these interviewee responses, Ekelund (2012) discussed the idea of political housekeeping to resolve these disconnections:

for men—who in a sense are ‘hypervisible’ in a feminist context —the reorientation towards taking care of housekeeping in feminist settings builds on it remaining invisible and, in a sense, disregarded. Otherwise, feminist men will risk being put on a pedestal for

doing work that women have been doing all the time without receiving any credit. (p. 516)

The act of political housekeeping not only helps men who want to “do” feminist work but legitimizes them from those who are strictly performative.

Given these contemporary perspectives men hold towards feminism, I believe Watson did attempt to call attention on the collective *pathos* of her audience by focusing on these feelings of disconnect. For instance, Watson (2014) argued that:

Hillary Clinton made a famous speech in Beijing about women's rights. Sadly, many of the things that she wanted to change are still true today. But what stood out for me the most was that less than 30 percent of the audience were male. How can we affect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation? (6:23-6:54)

This question prompted Watson to analyze the men in her life, observing how society devalued their roles as parents and either ignored or dismissed their mental health concerns. She even touched on how they too felt insecure due to the stereotypes applied to them, making them afraid to be emotional in fear of not living up to the idea of male success in our modern world. Watson furthered this appeal to the collective *pathos* of her audience by acknowledging some of the issues Ekelund (2021) pointed out. For instance, she quoted Edmund Burke's words, “All that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for good men and women to do nothing” (Watson, 2014, 10:29-10:40).³ Watson then continued this claim by urging the audience to ask themselves “If not me who? If not now. When?” within her invitation for men to join *HeForShe's* goals (Watson, 2014, 12:23-12:30).

³ Watson's use and phrasing of Burke's words here is not exact, though the message remains the same. It is also important to note that there is debate on whether Burke said this as there is no record of it in his writing.

Watson's attempt to highlight a few of the struggles men face in our contemporary world helped her connect with the audience by directly addressing their feelings and empathizing with their shared experiences. This had the effect of creating a stronger appeal to the audience's collective *pathos*, as earlier defined by Morosanu (2020). Despite aspects of Watson's argument being successful, it is once again important to note that her assessment of male inequalities was at best surface level as she only briefly touched on prominently unaddressed issues men experience. Furthermore, my earlier argument about Watson's lack of specificity on direct action connects with her attempt to appeal to the collective *pathos* of this audience as men may be held back from joining *HeForShe*'s efforts without knowing what they entail. As proposed by Ekelund (2012) non-performative acts of political housekeeping can be as simple as cleaning coffee cups to help break down barriers of otherwise gendered tasks. While *HeForShe* is tackling larger actions than those proposed by Ekelund, it was nevertheless imperative for Watson to outline the "how" to successfully appeal to her audience's collective *pathos* while deconstructing the divided preconceptions individuals hold towards "who can be a feminist?"

Watson's Feminist Approach in a Post "Me Too" World

Briefly, I want to analyze Watson's argument regarding male attitudes toward feminism in the context of contemporary feminist social movement. Despite *HeForShe*'s efforts, the argument for keeping men out of feminist frameworks is seemingly more present than ever as seen in a recent *Feminist Current* article:

Thanks to liberal feminists like Emma Watson, among others, many women have been made to believe that arguing for the inclusion of males in the women's movement is a worthwhile cause. But any group in protest of its oppression by another group is within its rights to demand that the oppressor not be included in its organizing. (Vigo, 2017)

While this represents the view of some female feminists, interviews conducted by Schubert et al. (2021) looked into modern opinions men have towards feminism, particularly when it comes to the #MeToo movement. Specifically, men seem to focus on the issue of exclusionary communicative acts rooted in blaming that they've witnessed within this movement, many interviewees reflecting a common pattern of feeling as though they get grouped into the mix of those who engage in gendered violence against women. In response to this, several online counter hashtags (i.e., #NotAllMen, #HimToo) have popped up to confront such blaming discourses. These counter hashtags are utilized to argue that "not all men" contribute to sexual violence or represent a threat, while also claiming that men face sexual violence, though at a much lower level than women. As a result, they faced severe online backlash from many women who felt that these hashtags centered men's voices within the issue of sexual violence. Beyond these specific counter-discourses, recent scholarship on #MeToo has continued to outline the general increase of tension and division men experience when engaging some feminist frameworks. For example, Lisnek et al. (2022) specifically noted how relatively conservative men, or those whose worldview favors the status quo, perceive #MeToo as harmful, thus placing them in a position of victimization. As a result, male engagement with #MeToo seems to primarily align with discourses that frame them as being "upheld as authority figures in enacting social change, and yet at the same time are deemed incapable and in need of education and close guidance" (Waling, 2022, p.17). While these blaming discourses and the male reaction to them are something that would need further discussion and research, this begins to paint a picture of why some men feel more divided than ever from the feminist movement.

Considering these varying perceptions of men's involvement within #MeToo, the division Watson outlined is prominent today. On the one hand, Watson's comments on feminism

being perceived as man-hating are still very much applicable as men navigate the blaming discourses noted earlier. Her use of *pathos* was fairly successful as she was able to empathize with and recognize how this issue is a key reason why many men are not as involved as they could be in the fight for gender equality. Additionally, her acknowledgment, however brief, of male experiences of inequality is another semi-successful *pathos* appeal as we see these emotions in men continue to develop through counter-hashtags like #HimToo. This hashtag (among others) emphasizes two main arguments: (1) that #MeToo sometimes facilitates false accusations that can destroy men's lives; and, (2) that men also experience sexual violence (NPR, 2018). The latter of these two points aligns closely with Watson's speech and *HeForShe's* argument as a whole. Understanding this, allows us to consider how Watson's emotional appeal may have helped guide men to make a more inclusive extension of the "Me Too" hashtag that fully represents their own experiences. However, we cannot consider one point without weighing the other's effect. In this case, we are pushed to recognize how the claim, "Me Too only produces false accusations," has harmed the positive progress that male-centered hashtags like this could potentially produce. While #HimToo, in theory, appears to be a good opportunity for conversation on an otherwise under-discussed issue in society and coincides with Watson's rhetorical approach to some extent, this phrase is quickly overrun with toxicity. For instance, Nomamiukor & Wisco (2023) analyzed how those exposed to #HimToo are more likely to accept or believe rape myths than those exposed to #MeToo, pointing to a clear continuation of the divide between men and current feminist frameworks. Considering this, Watson's call for unity between men and women in the fight to end inequality struggles to stay afloat despite the best efforts of some feminists who agree with Watson's claims. As it stands currently, there

seems to be more focus on why men and women are too different to agree on feminist issues, instead of focusing on why they need to work together, as Watson proposed.

Conclusion

Overall, Watson's speech made a genuine attempt to appeal to the *pathos* of her audience through the methods of "mentally representing" (Stoica, 2019, p.80) them via specific word choice, creating an emotional yet rational argument in the form of an *enthymeme* (Waddell, 1990), and trying to appeal to the audience's general "collective *pathos*" (Morosanu, 2020, p.94) by uniting them with *HeForShe*'s goals. Indeed, Watson was able to both recognize men's issues and utilize their emotions in a way that led them to join *HeForShe*. Nearly 80,000 men pledged to this campaign in the days following her address (Nichols, 2014). Despite *HeForShe*'s efforts, we can still see the ever-present issue of inequality and an even bigger divide between men and women on this subject today. One primary reason Watson's speech may have failed to contribute to long-term efforts in creating multi-gender, intersectional collaboration on women's equality was the fact that she did not dive beneath surface-level issues or address the concerns many feminists have about men joining the movement. Previous scholarship on Watson's speech aligns with this finding as others have pointed out her lack of intersectional feminist thought, her choice to center the solution to inequality on men, and even how her analysis of men's inequality was superficial (Matos, 2015; Vigo, 2017).

However, a key critique that's missing from previous scholarship is Watson's failure to address the divisive attitudes towards men's involvement within contemporary feminism. As a result, Watson's persuasion fell short as she failed to address this rift before explaining how men, on behalf of *HeForShe*, can aid in resolving gender inequality. Outlining the argument in this way would address the issue of this division head on to a majority male audience who may have

resonated more deeply with *HeForShe*'s overall efforts in the long run. While Watson attempted to address this division through her brief discussion of the association of feminism with “man-hating”, her analysis failed to maintain a connection both to the men who perceive this attitude (even if it is rare or misrepresented by opponents of feminism) and to the feminists who may initially oppose her arguments for inclusion. This latter group, feminists who were and are skeptical of cultivating a robust role for men within the movement, should be included as an important audience for the *HeForShe* campaign. Ultimately, Watson needed to emotionally connect with them as well to create a lasting dialogue that could cross the divides of contemporary feminist social movement. Her rhetorical failure in this regard in no way abrogates the important role she has and continues to play in the struggle for women's equality. But it does point to the complexity of situating oneself as a spokesperson for a broad and diverse movement. At times, the internal divisions and disagreements of the movement may render your message problematic.

Moreover, my critique of Watson's speech has explored the different intricacies of *pathos* as a rhetorical device in a way that reveals the overall complexity of *pathos* appeals. We begin to see how *pathos* is more than simply appealing to your audience's feelings and emotions within an argument. It is instead a culmination based on anticipating each of the varying emotions your audience members may have on the subject you speak about, addressing each in a way that emotionally and rationally connects them to your claim, and finally, pushing them toward a specific action once this connection has been fostered. While Watson by no means did each of these things perfectly, her address is a good way to outline these complex elements within a *pathos* appeal for future feminist approaches. Perhaps the most significant insight to be drawn

from Watson's speech is the importance of considering all the aspects that comprise your argument and your audience to produce a lasting overall impact!

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