

Mustang Advertising and the Impact of Feminism: Women's Representation in  
Ads from 1964-1975

by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Ads from 1964-1975

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Dr. Mary Rizzo

This thesis, Mustang Advertising and the Impact of Feminism: Women's Representation in Ads from 1964-1975 examines the change of women's representation in Mustang advertising from 1964-1975. Despite the Mustang's overall success, Ford would fail to properly embrace Feminist theory and concepts during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The following research analyzes a variety of advertising to show that, by attempting to utilize feminism within advertisements, Ford's use of a feminist inspired "independent woman" would still rely on gender roles. This thesis topic gives the opportunity to reflect on the history of women's representation in advertising and how women are represented in advertising today. Utilizing a combination of primary documents collected from sources such as The Henry Ford Archive; and a variety of secondary sources covering the topics of advertising, automobile history, and feminist history, these topics combined support my analysis of 1964-1975 Mustang advertising. Mustang advertisements from 1965 would heavily rely on glamourized and gendered depictions of women to promote their products. This glamourization would soon give way to depictions of an "independent woman" inspired by second wave-feminists starting in 1966. This depiction however would ultimately fall flat, due to reliance on gender roles created in a post war era.

Concluding the research by examining the impact of the rising environmental crisis in the 1970's, Ford's attempts of addressing rising social issues can be seen implemented in a similar fashion to it's attempts at addressing feminist audiences. It's success at addressing environmental concerns much like it's attempts at acknowledging feminism would be unsuccessful. With the next generation of Mustang's introduced to a unimpressed public, Ford would once again enter into a period of uncertainty where innovation was called upon once again. Using these findings to better understand the history of women's representation in advertising, similar observations can be made about modern advertising and how it impacts women today.

## Preface

Mustang Advertising and the Impact of Feminism: Women's Representation in Ads from 1964-1975 was written for the partial fulfillment of graduation requirement of the Master of Arts History Program at Rutgers-Newark. I engaged in research and writing this thesis from the Fall of 2020 to the Winter of 2021. Under the direction of my advisor Mary Rizzo, I began to formulate my idea for my thesis research. This project was born out of my own history with Ford and more specifically the 1965 Ford Mustang. My first car being a Ford Mustang, I was later given the opportunity to own my very own 1965 Mustang which has since become my pride and joy. This thesis has allowed me to delve more into the history of a car that has meant so much to me, and as a historian I cannot think of a better way to use my interest in the Mustang to help me further my experience as a historian and scholar. It is with great excitement that I present the following work. The work of a historian and that of an enthusiast.

I hope you enjoy your reading.

Marissa Powell

St. Louis, November 29, 2021

## Acknowledgements

I would like to firstly thank my advisor Dr. Mary Rizzo for her guidance and support throughout the process of research and writing all the while operating remotely during a pandemic. Thank you for helping me shape my interests and ideas into something tangible. I would also like to thank Rutgers University for the opportunity to grow my skills as a historian and scholar at such a reputable institution. Thank you to John Cotton Dana Library for assistance in my research and access to sources while remote. Thank you to The Henry Ford Foundation for a plethora of well-organized primary sources. I hope that this and future works will continue to showcase the excellent education given through its programs. Finally for my family and friends that have supported my journey from Undergrad to now, thank you. Thank you, Mom, for keeping me sane and providing me a space to work during a global lockdown. Your belief in me truly kept me going even when I had my own personal doubts of my success. I hope to someday be half as an amazing woman that you are, and that I can continue to make you proud. Thank you to my Grandparents and Nana and Papa for always supporting my education and encouraging me to read and explore to my heart's content.



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## Chapter 1: The Start of an Era

From 1965-1975 the Ford Motor Company introduced one of the most recognizable and iconic muscle cars in automobile history, the Mustang. Set to be revealed on April 17, 1964, at the New York World's Fair, the Ford Mustang had an undeniable pull even before its official debut. Its importance in the automotive world and for Ford stems from its massive success in the automotive market, which would become a lifesaver for a, at the time, struggling Ford.

Recognizing the effectiveness of utilizing the rising sentiments for the concept of "youth" products, Ford was quick to use the idea of selling youth in its products to create the perfect "youth car." Not only saving Ford from a previous company failure, the Mustang soon after its debut became a legendary pony car<sup>1</sup> in an era later known for its iconic muscle cars<sup>2</sup>.

Second-wave feminism<sup>3</sup> began to develop simultaneously, which affected Ford's advertising of the car as it sought more female buyers and drivers. Noting the beginnings of the

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Pony car" became popularized after the launch of the Mustang keeping the horse theme of names. Causing other American manufacturers to release competing models to add to the Pony car craze. Pony cars are often defined by "stylish, affordable, American cars that were generally built with mass production parts. They have two doors, four seats, and are "performance-oriented", if not flat-out sporty." Steven Perez, "Muscle Cars vs. Pony Cars | Field Notes: The Turo Blog," Turo (Turo, June 26, 2017), <https://turo.com/blog/gearheads/muscle-cars-vs-pony-cars>.

<sup>2</sup> The term muscle car would emerge later into the pony car craze with identified pony cars getting upgrades. The platform is the defining distinction between a pony car and a muscle car. Pony cars had more compact size with unibody construction. Muscle cars were mid- to full-size cars with full frames and a V8 engine. Perez, "Muscle Cars vs. Pony Cars | Field Notes: The Turo Blog".

<sup>3</sup> For scholarship on second-wave feminism see Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2019). which reconstructs the origins of radical feminism and the discussions that occurred throughout its development and it's eventual decline. See also, Sara M. Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century's End* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2004). that tracks the evolution of the use of feminism as a common label and the changes of the feminist movement. In Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York, NY: Basic

movement with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, discussions around an issue such as a feeling of unfulfillment from housewives slowly opened the door for women to begin public discussions of their feelings on their current status and place in society. Moving from conversations in local communities to open national activism calling for increased equality for women, second-wave feminists were responsible for making the movement a public focus once again after a lull following suffrage. Through various subgroups all operating under the label of Feminism, issues from women's role in society to women's portrayal in popular culture and legal protection for reproductive rights were all addressed in some way during the second wave.

Just as feminism and the Ford Motor Company began a new era in each of their social and cultural areas, advertising<sup>4</sup> would also see a change starting in the 1960s. Changing from the early 20th century when advertisers appealed to national markets, the 1960s began to identify niche markets, which were defined as focusing on a group that would seemingly benefit the most from a product or service. By creating niche groups, advertisements could now spin products to multiple groups of potential customers that were previously not targeted explicitly under the

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Books, 2017). examines the rising isolationist political and cultural policies that would ostracize women from the political scene.

<sup>4</sup> For scholarship on advertising see Mary Rizzo, *Class Acts: Young Men and the Rise of Lifestyle* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2015). which addresses the connection between rebellion in young men and marketing campaigns. Katherine J. Parkin, *Food Is Love Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). notes how advertisements are often a clear glimpse into the minds of the advertisement creators themselves through an analysis of 150 issues of *Ladies Home Journal* and other material to conclude how food was marketed to women. In Joseph Turow, *Breaking up America: Advertisers and the New Media World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006). the advertising industry during the 1970's to the 1990's to showcase how the advertising industry began to focus on individual groups instead of the collective whole. Thomas C. Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997). examines the first period of "counterculture" in the 1960's and how it's cause and effect would have a rather large hand in one of the most impactful periods of advertising.

illusion of individualism. The act of grouping potential consumers would begin a flurry of advertisements centered around a collection of factors including but not limited to gender, class, and race. For Ford's advertising of the Mustang, Ford's promotion used a combination of appropriation of youth imagery and concepts from the Feminist movement to create targeted advertisements.

This paper's research into the Ford Mustang advertising campaigns will showcase how it failed to adequately represent feminist concepts and theory despite its overall general success. From 1964-1975, Ford advertised the Mustang in ways that reflected second wave Feminism from one that used glamourized and gendered images of women (1964-1965) to instead using the feminist concepts of an "independent woman" while still heavily implying the need for male influence in a woman's life (1966-1975). In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss three scholarly fields related to this research. They are advertising, automobile history, and Feminist history.

When researching this thesis, the global pandemic limited my accessibility to resources—working remotely for the entirety of the project limited research to what was accessible through remote access. With much of its history preserved by the company's meticulous records and avid fans of the car, the Mustang offers a unique opportunity into the mindset and reactions of a company and its product marketing in a politically and socially changing time frame of the sixties and seventies. Starting with general searches for primary sources on the Mustang's development, The Henry Ford Archive was a fantastic plethora of information from original press release packets to original marketing documents and chronologically organized advertisements. The Rutgers University library's materials and databases also provided a plethora of secondary texts for my topics of Feminist history, Advertising, and Automobile history. From

my findings, I soon began to follow footnotes and references materials from both secondary sources and primary sources to create my thesis. Through my collaborative research of Feminist history, Advertising, and Automobile history, a historical narrative showcases how the overlap of the second-wave Feminist movement, the launch of the Mustang, and change in advertising interacted with one another.

## **History of Women Drivers and The Foundation of Women Targeted Marketing<sup>5</sup>**

To understand the importance of the automobile and its impact on American life, one must turn to one of modern-day society's common rites of passage. Passing a driver's test to become a licensed driver represents a rite of passage into adulthood as well as a ticket to freedom. For a domain that quickly became male-dominated during its early years, it is unsurprising that women would find themselves in a predicament of constant judgment for attempting to participate in the automotive world. The path to becoming an automobile driver for women is in itself an intriguing history. In the following section, a brief recounting of the history of female drivers shows how eventually Ford would market its Mustang to them by the 1960s

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<sup>5</sup> An Archive Insight, "Chicks and Cars: Ford Automotive Advertisements and Female Consumers -- the Henry Ford Blog - Blog," The Henry Ford (The Henry Ford Archive, March 26, 2012), <https://www.thehenryford.org/explore/blog/chicks-and-cars-ford-automotive-advertisements-and-female-consumers/>. Archive Insight from The Henry Ford Archive discussed the company's early attempts at marketing to a feminine audience and the assumptions made based on gender roles within advertisements. Georgine Clarsen, *Eat My Dust: Early Women Motorists* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). Georgine Clarsen offered a fantastic exploration into the world of women automobilists in the aftermath of World War 1 and the disconnect that had occurred between generations of the second wave- Feminist women who, including the author, would unknowingly be delving into the automotive world just as their mothers had done previously without their knowledge.

and 1970s. In Virginia Scharff's, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age*, women's perceived intrusion into driving is described,

“Whether they drove or not, whether they wished to be noticed or not, motoring women made themselves conspicuous. Some courted the public eye and found the automobile a handy device to attract attention. Others, less interested in notoriety than in mobility, tried to invade the masculine domain of the automobile without exciting comment. They had to fail. Simply getting into a motor vehicle made women too prominent to escape notice; actually taking the wheel made them too astonishing to escape controversy. For women, the journey from back seat to front seat, from passenger-hood to control of a vehicle deeply identified with men, began in public and entailed repeated confrontations with popular manners, morals, and expectations.”<sup>6</sup>

By blatantly stepping into the perceived exclusively masculine space, women quickly found themselves adversaries to men when they wished to enjoy driving an automobile just as men did. The fact that accessibility to this machinery depended on one's access through wealth or social standing also limited women's early involvement to a select few upper-class women. For those of such status, the reality of owning a vehicle and knowing how to operate it were often separate affairs. For upper-class women who owned a car and wished to use it without the associated risks, hired help could be added to the equation to chauffeur women around. Gone were the days of complete separation from the controller or coach driver and passenger. Their interaction soon changed as their safety and enjoyment of the vehicle was more reliant than ever on the direction and skill of a lower economic class individual. This example of growing unease showed when the New York City YMCA opened a chauffeur training school in 1904. The *New York Times* noted the "alleged carelessness and dishonesty of many of the men who drive motor cars." Having declared to train "Americans" and "Christians," the YMCA insisted that its training of

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<sup>6</sup> Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1999). 16-17.

young men would help lower the number of foreign drivers.<sup>7</sup> However, the threat of power imbalance between driver and passenger would continue to shake up class relations between working and upper-class individuals.

When once again considering women's role in this slowly developing field, the moral implications of an upper-class woman at the mercy of a working-class man were more than enough of a reason to cause alarm in American society during the early 1900s. In "The Wonderful Monster," a 1905 serial warned of the power of both cars and male drivers to awaken incendiary urges in women. The story's narrative about women forges a report that "by trying to grasp the modern pleasure of automotive speed, which gives her an illegitimate and explosively sexualized power over time and space" would prove to be the downfall of her status and place in society.<sup>8</sup> Although written as a warning for what could happen to women if they fell to the temptations of driving, this story also notes a change in society for women as women's role in society began to change with the possibility of women's suffrage and involvement in continued education. Women's suffrage would also find its base in the activism of women protesting in public spaces breaking previous traditions of keeping women specifically in a domestic space and out of public affairs such as politics. Easier maneuverability would soon push this breakdown between public and private spaces further through the increased obtainability of the automobile.

In a brilliant blurring of expected spheres of private and public life, the automobile offered a moveable personal space in the public realm. Something that had not been easily

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<sup>7</sup> Scharff, *Taking the Wheel*, 19.

<sup>8</sup> Scharff, *Taking the Wheel*, 22.



accessible began to open to include women in the larger public domain slowly. As automobiles became more popular in American society, automobile ownership information collected showcases that women were very much involved despite public opinion. "The Los Angeles County Automobile Directory revealed that in 1914, fifteen percent of new cars registered in the county appeared under women's names. A 1914 directory of automobile owners in Tucson, Arizona listed 425 car owners, only 23 of whom (or five percent) were women. The Houston Automobile Directory for 1915 listed 7732 auto owners, including 425 women (5.5 percent)."<sup>9</sup> Although seemingly un-impressive at first glance, this data does not include the possibility of women drivers whose vehicles were listed under their husband's name, which they then drove themselves.

Just as with any pioneering women attempting to enter into a new space during the early 1900s, women who took place behind the wheel of a vehicle soon found themselves demeaned by three claims of presumed inferiority, "emotional instability, physical weakness, and intellectual deficiencies."<sup>10</sup> Women would begin to challenge this view of inferiority; specifically, women who fit the image of a well-to-do, beautiful woman challenged this perspective in written narrative, whether it be fiction writing or nonfiction. This fight for acceptance, however, would still have men doubting women's capability behind the wheel. "Women, the men point out, suffer from natural impulsiveness and timidity, and inability to concentrate and single-mindedness, indecisiveness, and foolhardiness, weakness and utter estrangement from things mechanical."<sup>11</sup> Fighting the stereotypes harshly placed upon them for

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<sup>9</sup> Scharff, *Taking the Wheel*, 26.

<sup>10</sup> Scharff, *Taking the Wheel*, 26.

<sup>11</sup> Scharff, *Taking the Wheel*, 26.

being the "fairer sex," even fully qualified women found themselves fighting to be accepted in the automotive world. For women with any mechanical experience, their ability to work with and identify any issues within the machine proved to be a pleasant surprise of competency from women according to men who believed the complications of the working machinery could be too much to handle for women. The ability to work on one's vehicle would become not as big of an issue with the creation of professional mechanics and nationwide garages where experienced mechanics could perform services and maintenance.

Writing for *Motor* in 1904, Mrs. A. Sherman Hitchcock of Providence, Rhode Island, offered some advice to women on driving and addressing the concerns of her male peers. "The first requisite ... for the woman beginner is absolute confidence in herself," and asserted that experience would bring increased assurance... She conceded that "most men have some idea of mechanics, but to most women they are an unknown quantity." She believed, however, that "there are, no doubt, many women who possess an inherent ability for mechanics... [who] soon will be able to locate technical troubles and overcome them. If no inherent tendency exists, one can very likely be developed."<sup>12</sup> By using the vehicle more frequently, Hitchcock felt, women's confidence in their abilities would not only grow but their capabilities and skills as drivers and owners of automobiles would improve. Women continued to show their interest in the action of driving and owning a vehicle. With more women getting behind the wheel, a shift from a passive passenger to a more active driver was often thrilling and empowering for individuals thought of as second-class citizens to white males in society.

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<sup>12</sup> Scharff, *Taking the Wheel*, 27.

Much like decades earlier, women drivers in the 1950s faced challenges as driving in some cases had no longer just been a tool for themselves but a necessity for participating in domestic life. This double-edged dynamic is noted as both leisure and duty in Katherine J Parkin's *Women at the Wheel: A Century of Buying, Driving and Fixing Cars*.

“While one historian contended that driving “represented liberation from the household,” home economist Christine Frederick noted that moving to the countryside meant that in addition to all the farm production she was responsible for, she also had to serve as a *chauffeuse*. Most women discovered that they needed to drive to facilitate everything from daily milk delivery to doctor's care. Their work also included taking their husbands to the train or their jobs and their children to school and activities. Across the century, even those women with the means to drive did so almost entirely in service of their domestic responsibility and identities.”<sup>13</sup>

Through their domestic duty towards their families, many women found themselves lacking any true power behind the wheel as their position was automatically the passenger if a man was present in the car at the same time. However, women's claim with their automobiles regained enthusiasm in the 1960s and 1970s, with early women drivers' obituaries describing their experiences and feats in newsprint. Women would continue to face challenges in the automotive world as women were denied applying for a driver's license in their maiden name and not just their spouse's name. Women's experience trying to purchase a vehicle at a showroom was often another instance of belittlement based on gender. " An observer recounted that in the 1970s salesmen interpreted women's presence in the showroom as an opportunity for sexual pursuits and "would offer ' a discount for a date.' " Showrooms persisted as a male domain. Salesmen

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<sup>13</sup> Katherine J. Parkin, *Women at the Wheel: A Century of Buying, Driving, and Fixing Cars* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). 8.

belittled women with "honey," "babe," and "sexually pushy" behavior, rather than treating them respectfully as prospective buyers of an expensive item."<sup>14</sup>

### **Advertising and a Divided Population: Through Gender, Class, and Race<sup>15</sup>**

Since they were invented, cars have been gendered. Advertising and marketing have shaped how this happens. Dividing up the consumer population by gender, class, and race, advertising through these divisions reflects societal ideas about proper gender and other social roles. By applying this concept to vehicles, society in the late 1890s and early 1900s had even gone as far as gendering vehicles based on their power sources. Gas-powered cars became masculine, for their noise levels and odors would quickly overpower female sensibilities. With this mindset, electric cars were soon designated female vehicles for their simplicity, comfort, quiet, and restricted range due to a weaker power source. Electric vehicles association with women would eventually lead electric car manufacturers to market directly to women in their advertisements. "Touting such virtues as luxury, beauty, ease of operation, and economy, manufacturers attempted to appeal to an affluent female clientele without alienating men who might wish to purchase an electric for themselves. The Argo company advertised its 1912 model,

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<sup>14</sup> Parkin, *Women at the Wheel*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Along with the later cited works, secondary sources such as Joseph Turow, *Breaking up America: Advertisers and the New Media World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006). offered an analysis of the change in advertising from the 1970s to the 1990s. His research would give context to the background of marketing that would occur in the latter part of my time frame and help compare and analyze the feminist movement's impact/critique of advertisements. Katherine J. Parkin, *Food Is Love Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). showcases through analysis of 150 issues of *Ladies Home Journal* and other material to conclude that how food was marketed to women was implemented in 6 significant ways. This source offered another study of advertisements produced by J. Walter Thompson and how they could utilize women's insecurities over their changing social role to push them to buy the advertised products.

a sporty low-slung electric vehicle, as "a woman's car that any man is proud to drive."<sup>16</sup> The idea of targeting women as a specific consumer in the automotive market utilized women in their advertisements using electric vehicles while still ensuring that a man's involvement was in the process by either a potential customer or controller of the car when deemed necessary by the man of the house. Targeting a specific group of consumers based on gender and supposedly targeted to women was still relying on male influence to purchase the product is a practice that would continue into the automotive industry well into the 1960s and 1970s.

As automotive marketing began to recognize women as potential customers for their products, it is unsurprising that advertising began to capitalize on the idea of "women" branded products that could be made through usually small details to an already produced product to appeal to a female audience as well as their typically male-dominated consumer base. *Breaking Up America : Advertisers and the New Media World* by Joseph Turlow perfectly captures this sentiment through the discussion of niche marketing. "No longer was it enough to talk about "homemaker" or "woman" or "black". Marketers subjected these and other labels to new research and came up with several groups within them-different kinds of women, several kinds of homemakers."<sup>17</sup> The practice of brands intentionally rebranding to gain the public's trust in their product and ensure their power in the consumer market, changes in the 1960s and into the 1970s had to be addressed. Analyzing changes in social standards, style, and even crafting this need for a return to youth Ford Motor Company and its accompanying marketing plans with J. Walter Thompson utilized change.

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<sup>16</sup>Scharff, *Taking the Wheel*, 38.

<sup>17</sup> Turow, *Breaking up America*, 55.

This quick turnabout in stylings was seen through the introduction of the Mustang and its immediate following years. The car did not solely rely on glamour and grandeur associated with the previous decade. Still, instead, it came to represent youth and rebellion, themes that had taken over in popular culture. This switch in how the advertising industry produced advertising for the public is explained in Thomas Frank's work, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, "Roland Marchand has demonstrated that advertising before World War II advised consumers in navigating the complex and hazardous ways of modernity; advertising in the sixties and afterwards counseled consumers on maintaining individuality and purpose in a time that sought to deny individuality."<sup>18</sup> Gone was the focus on appliances and features that were changing aspects of everyday life, such as washing machines and microwave ovens, which encouraged a generation of Americans to move into the American Dream of the fifties. The sixties relied heavily on individualism to make products unique from the competition and symbols of rebellion from the uniformity of the previous generation. Compared to the different advertising campaigns that would occur for the Mustang between 1965-1975, Ford's more extensive ad campaigns would begin debuting on the national scale during the peak of "hip" advertising that Frank notes showing that Ford was keeping a finger on the pulse of the rising counter culture sentiments. However, this notice of change in opinions did not immediately mean that it fully supported or understood the changes called for by protesting groups. The sense of freedom from the decade paired with shifting ideals for a woman's place in society was hinted at by changes in models' styles and throw-away lines in advertisements. Still, Ford was ultimately falling short of entirely creating a feminist advertisement. As Frank writes within his piece, "Advertising in the 1960s taught that the advertising of the 1950s had been

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<sup>18</sup> Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 133.

terribly mistaken, that people should not consume in order to maximize their efficiency or fit in or impress their neighbors. Instead, consuming was to derive its validity from the impulse to be oneself, to do one's own thing."<sup>19</sup> Brands no longer solely focused on awards or where the nation ranked their products in their fields; they had to continue to craft an identity that they were merely a brand, unlike the rest.

Advertising's relationship with societal expectations has been observed to have far deeper connections than initially thought. Just as historians have shown how in a variety of ways advertising has utilized, converted, and set expectations for society through its careful choices of interaction with current expectations, Katherine Parkin's *Food is Love: Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* showcases through analysis of 150 issues of *Ladies Home Journal* and other material to conclude that how food was marketed to women was implemented in 6 significant ways. Analyzing ads primarily controlled by J. Walter Thompson noted marketing tactics included using food as a form of love that women could give their spouses and families, tapping into women's insecurities over their changing roles in society at the time (by using manufactured food as a tool for women's independence) comparing women and food to rising social issues, and the use of gender roles and beauty standards to push women to conform to the rising manufactured food industry. Parkin's work notes how advertisements are often a clear glimpse into the advertisement creators' minds through the thorough breakdown of advertisements. I apply a similar approach in analyzing how Ford's marketing of the Mustang would objectify and sell to women, with the appropriation of rising feminist ideals and concepts being used as marketing tools.

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<sup>19</sup> Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 136.

In contrast, women themselves were a way to market to a male consumer base. While attempting to make a "youth car," Ford's attempts at reading the market's needs became what Ford thought was appropriate for the new market. By taking a risk with the development and launch of the Mustang, Ford gambled at how well it would appeal to public wants and entice new customers to the branding. By understanding the combined nature of the rising feminist movement as well as the actions taken by Ford's marketing team to utilize counter-culture themes for their media imagery, Ford's success can be deeper analyzed to show that Ford was unable to follow any feminist theories or concepts in-depth and integrate them into their own company and products.

In chapter 2, I will explore what a woman's life was like in a postwar period leading up to 1965. Exploring the rise of the housewife and the strict constructed gender roles in the United States during the Cold War, women's questioning of their roles in society is first largely noted with the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* that is largely noted as the beginning point for secondwave feminism. Delving into the development and initial launch of the Mustang, its careful development and planning are examined showcasing how important the success of the Mustang was for Ford. Looking at initial ads released for the Mustang at its launch and first year of production, the specific use of glamour and prestige help to understand Ford's ideas of what men and women's roles should be in society. Chapter 3 looks at the Feminist movement from 1966 until the early 1970s, showcasing the continual rise of Feminism through various forms of activism and increased coverage by mainstream media. Exploring two different ad campaigns published by Ford, "Six and the Single Girl" and "Take the Mustang Pledge" offer a stark contrast in imagery used within Mustang Advertisements. Leaning into the rising cultural sentiments of "youth" and feminist theory, images of younger feminist liberated women became



the focus while still relying on gender roles popularized during the Cold War era. Finally, in the conclusion, I move into the next rising challenge to the automotive industry that would move the focus away from appealing to feminist women, the environmental crisis. Discussing the formation of such agencies as the EPA and the various legislations passed which purpose was to make improvements on emissions and the nations environmental impact, Ford's response and attempts to adapt are analyzed showing its similarities to previous ads. Facing an oil crisis that would overlap at the same time as environmental concerns began to rise, Ford's failure with the Mustang II would prove that once again Ford would need to adapt to survive in the market. Reflecting on past challenges that women faced in representation, such as the Mustang marketing campaign, this thesis gives insight into how representation is delivered today and in what ways.



## Ch. 2: Ladies and Gentlemen—the Mustang!

"Peace Through Understanding" was the theme given to the 1964 World's Fair, with over 650 acres of pavilions, public spaces, and displays from around the world. Along with the themes of understanding, the World's Fair acted as an opportunity for leading figures and companies to showcase their ideas for the future. One debut would soon become legendary as Ford officially released its newest vehicle. In the Wonder Rotunda, otherwise known as the Ford Pavillion, the Mustang was revealed to the general public on April 17, 1964, marking the beginning of an ongoing legacy of Ford's famous pony car. A car for an up and coming youthful generation, the Mustang was Ford's carefully planned response to the automotive consumer market. Focusing on the glamour of the Mustang with its carefully crafted stylings and group-tested features would skyrocket the Mustang into success. Targeting a younger generation, Ford focused on the youth of its potential customers, with young women being depicted as happy mothers and youthful consumers in the market. A little over a year before the Mustang was publicly released, *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan began the national discussion about the feelings of dissatisfaction felt by women in society as mothers and consumers. The stark difference in approach gives an interesting angle in which to analyze how exactly Ford's attitude towards women relied heavily upon the gendered and glamourized images of women to market the Mustang and would slowly begin to adapt their portrayal of women to fit a changing social mentality due to feminist influences in later years without truly abandoning traditional gendered roles and dynamics.

The 1960s held many opportunities and experiences that would eventually become defining points of the decade to solidify its reputation of producing some of the most well-known counterculture and activist movements in the United States. Among the many movements that

began to gain attention, what would become the second wave of Feminism started to slowly gain a following after a long period of disconnect between the previous iteration of women's rights back in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1963, the often-cited beginning of the second wave, *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan, would go on to sell more than three million copies within the first three years of its release.

<sup>1</sup> Focusing on "the problem that has no name," Friedan's work would focus mainly on a middle-class housewife demographic over the feelings of dissatisfaction, having focused their entire lives around the management and upkeep of a home and family without any other activities to create an identity for themselves. Among themes discussed, one named "The sexual sell" was Friedan's analysis of capitalism and how Brand companies targeted marketing to women (mainly housewives), which has continued to affect marketing plans.

In the following chapter, a background of women in the postwar period is explored, showcasing how American society viewed women and their expected role in society. From the United States' focus on solidifying the part of the suburban housewife in the Cold War era to the rise of women questioning their roles in society and within the home, the beginnings of what would become known as the second wave of Feminism is explored. Utilizing sources such as Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* to explore post-war women and public reactions to the publishing of *The Feminine Mystique* showcasing firsthand responses to a notable Feminist piece, I show that women were beginning to discuss their own reluctance to continue participating in gender roles established during the Cold War

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<sup>1</sup> Robert McCrum, "The 100 Best Nonfiction Books: No 18 – the Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan (1963)," *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, May 30, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/may/30/feminine-mystique-100-best-nonfiction-books-robert-mccrum>.

and instead demand for increased rights in society. Transitioning to a history of the development and launch of the Mustang, I delve into the Mustang's creation to give insight into Ford during this time. Finishing the chapter by examining advertisements released by Ford at the Mustang's launch and early days, Ford's glamourization and gendered images of women are analyzed in the beginnings of feminist influence on popular culture and their marketing campaign.

## **Women in the Postwar Period**

Although a title often dropped in conversation when discussing the study of Feminism and frequently analyzed more critically according to modern ideas, to properly understand the effect of Friedan's work on society during the 1960s, one must look at what expectations were for women and homemakers before its publication. Coming out of a wartime period, the idea of perfect suburbia became a wanted escape for the United States that had faced the horrors of the Second World War and the immediate follow-up that would become the Cold War. In Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, the relatively rigid understanding of the "nuclear family" in the nuclear age is described as "isolated, sexually charged, cushioned by abundance, and protected against impending doom by the wonders of modern tech."<sup>2</sup> In a world threatened by nuclear fallout, the home and those who inhabited familial roles became necessary to achieve some sense of control. Creating a "baby-boom" young Americans in the aftermath of World War Two married at a younger age and had larger families from the 1940s until the early 1960s. Through the solidification of home rules, the Government could also portray the strength of the United States to enemies such as the Soviet

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<sup>2</sup> May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2017).

Union during such periods as the Red Scare. This sense of containment May notes would be a significant contributor in most decisions made in the decade. The American public could achieve safety in the home and society by containing factors, behaviors, or individuals who did not fit the accepted behavior model.

However, despite these efforts, the desire for stability and a better life in the aftermath of such turbulent times would prove to fall short of fulfilling their ideas of happiness were often never achieved. Women who had stepped up on the homefront were now ushered into the role of homemaker and housewife. Placing all of their energy and time into the art of creating an ideally kept home while also entertaining the whims of their spouses and the needs of their children, American women were soon faced with a crisis of identity and questioning of self-worth. Throughout their efforts to follow the new expectation to marry quickly, start a family, and become a doting wife, and wish to explore interests outside of the previously mentioned categories was to commit a social faux pas, leading to harsh criticism. Exploring this phenomenon, Stephanie Coontz's work *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* utilizes letters and oral histories of readers of Friedan's work during its original release. Opening her work with a cover article published in the *Saturday Evening Post* one month before *The Feminist Mystique* was released, Coontz explores the content published about the "typical American woman." Ignoring any women who did not fit the housewife and homemaker role, the author George Gallup focused on a woman who society was "geared" for, "thirty-five years old, had two children (but was hoping for a third), and was a full-time homemaker. She had completed slightly more than three years of high school and had

been happily married for fourteen years. And unstated though this was, she was white.”<sup>3</sup> This idea of the average expectation of a woman is a harsh reality of how America expected that the women in society would fit into these roles of complete and unquestioning devotion to the male in a relationship.

When looking at interviews made for the article, although women were seemingly content with their subservient role in society, using a critical eye of the discussions, Coontz notes showcases the issues brewing underneath the surface. This stark difference in women's satisfaction with their daily lives written in publications made within a month proves that women wished for more, creating a solid foundation for second-wave Feminism to build on. Considering this in recounting her own experience with *The Feminist Mystique*, Coontz recalls her conversations with her mother, who had first brought the work to her attention. "Do you know that sociologists misrepresent research to make women feel guilty if they aren't completely happy as full-time housewives?" she asked. Wasn't it scandalous that when a woman expressed aspirations for anything else in her life, psychiatrists tried to make her think she was sexually maladjusted? Was I aware that advertisers manipulated women into thinking that doing household chores was a creative act, and had housewives spending more time on it than they really needed to?"<sup>4</sup> Going on to recount her annoyance at her mother's commentary of the *Feminine Mystique*, Coontz showcases perfectly how the divide in attitude towards societal expectations had begun to change between one generation. While her mother and other women who had entered into the role of housewife in the 1950s and early 1960s began to feel more

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<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*.

comfortable discussing the "problem with no name," their daughters were pioneering a new independent identity for themselves, which denied any connection to the feminine roles shoved onto their mothers.

Betty Friedan's work would open a more extensive discussion for following feminists to expand on the argument made and begin the call for change in how women were treated in society. The popularized phrase of the "personal is political" would become a rallying cry for many women as the realization that issues of sexual health, relationships, domestic labor, and more were not just individual issues but issues that women faced every day and demands for equality were not just a want but a necessity. In 1964 the passing of the Civil Rights Bill with an added amendment to prohibit discrimination by sex and race, color, religion, and national origin should have been enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Yet, the separation of classified ads by sex was still in use until 1968.<sup>5</sup> A rise in activism from women would begin to gain more traction as a stewardesses' union gained a hearing before the House Labor subcommittee in September of 1965 to protest airlines' policy of forcing retirement when stewardesses reached their early thirties. With a lack of crackdown on discrimination from the EEOC, 1966 found the organization National Organization for Women (NOW), which would champion equality laws for women, battle discrimination in the workplace, and provide a legal console for women. Discussions stemming from Friedan's work would begin to manifest in forms of protest, political organization, and calls for equal opportunities for women continued to build upon each other, resulting in various supporters under the Feminist cause.

### **The Mustang means fun, youth, and glamour...**

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<sup>5</sup> Coontz, *A Strange Stirring*.



As the new wave of Feminism began to stir, the new decade would also act as a unique opportunity for companies, especially Ford. Having had a fumble with the launch of the Edsel in 1958, Ford soon realized it had to adapt to the new era. With the changing demands from consumers, Ford quickly had to realize that the call for innovation had to be met to keep up with demand. In a post-war era, Ford's lineup was lacking for the coming of age baby-boom demographic. Ford's main American domestic lineup consisted of the Ford Falcon, Ford Fairlane, Ford Galaxie, and the second generation Ford Thunderbird. In early 1964, Ford was about to change the automotive industry forever with a statement made to the public. "Ford Division confirmed today that it will introduce a new line of cars this spring," said the press release issued February 6, 1964, by Lee Iacocca, vice president of Ford Motor Company. Despite Henry Ford II stating that he did not want any new vehicles pitched for fear of failure, Iacocca decided to move forward and begin the brainstorming process. "The new line of cars will be called the Mustang ... no further details on the new car line will be revealed until the time of its public introduction."<sup>6</sup> Through careful deliberation, stylistic choices and how to approach the market with their new vehicle began to form, resulting in a few realizations.

"It had to seat four passengers. It needed an ample trunk. The hood should belong – to suggest a powerful engine, while the rear deck should be short – to suggest lithe speed. The car would have a multitude of options allowing the customer to personalize it. The weight had to stay under 2,500 pounds and the base price had to hold below \$2,500. Finally, to ensure maximum publicity, the car had to launch in April 1964 at the New York World's Fair. The fair promised global press attention. The spring launch ensured that Ford's new car wouldn't have to share the media spotlight with competitors' cars unveiled in the fall."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Mustang World's Fair*, Ford Corporate (Ford Motor Company ), accessed April 29, 2021, <https://corporate.ford.com/articles/history/mustang-worlds-fair.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Archive, Insight *Mustang: The Birth of an American Icon - Blog*. The Henry Ford. The Henry Ford, June 11, 2014. <https://www.thehenryford.org/explore/blog/mustang-the-birth-of-an-american-icon>.

Through several weeks of development within Ford's design staff, a final design prototype was selected and brought to Watkins Glen in October of 1963. Gaining a large amount of interest from the crowds present. "The car was described internally as "Personality: demure enough for church-going, racy enough for the dragstrip, modish enough for the country club." Once more, a strange phenomenon occurred when brought before a Ford-selected group of 52 couples with young children to gain consumer perspective outside the targeted demographic.

“After reviewing the car, the couples were asked if it would be a practical automobile for the family. Most replied “no.” The couples were then asked to name the price they thought the car might retail for. Most picked figures that were thousands over the expected selling price. When they were told the actual price, the couples underwent a strange transformation of opinions. Husbands and wives went back for a second look at the Mustang, and without exception began to find reasons why this car really would be practical for them after all. The design, features, options and price made it irresistible.”<sup>8</sup>

Through this observation, Ford had been given the golden ticket to help the marketing of their new car. With photographs focusing on the glamour of the Mustang along with the reasonable price, this targeted car towards the upcoming young educated baby-boom young adults now became an option for families, women, and older couples as well. Knowing the features wanted in a new vehicle was only a part of the challenge for Ford. A changing clientele also offered a challenge and a broader market to advertise to. Opportunities had expanded for this up-and-coming generation. With access to upper education becoming more readily available, college-educated individuals began to seek vehicles for themselves. "For example, in 1962, 46% of new car purchases were made by people with some level of college, despite the fact they only made up 18% of the total population."<sup>9</sup> Families who had recently moved to the suburbia promised to

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<sup>8</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate Ford Motor Company ), accessed April 29, 2021, <https://corporate.ford.com/articles/history/mustang.html>.

<sup>9</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate

them in post-war time were searching for a second car to fill their new garages. "The number of families owning two or more cars increased from 1 million in 1959 to 13 million by 1963, and was continuing to rise."<sup>10</sup> Among an expanding consumer market, women in the United States also began to get behind the wheel in increasing numbers as family incomes began to allow for another vehicle. "Research showed that women car owners were one of the segments growing most quickly and that the number of female drivers had increased by 53% between 1956 and 1963."<sup>11</sup> As an increasing consumer group, women also brought to designer's attention features that made sense for women specifically. The car had to be easy to maneuver as, during this time, power steering had not yet become commonplace, meaning that turning the vehicle was harder at slower speeds. The length of the car also had to be manageable to park easily. Combining a long vehicle body that had become so popular in the 1950s with a hard-to-turn steering wheel was not ideal when parking in a parking lot. Considering that women would often use these vehicles on daily commutes or errands, these issues had to be addressed well with a female audience.

Choosing April 17, 1964, at the New York World's Fair to debut the Mustang to the general public, at the Wonder Rotunda at the World's Fairgrounds, visitors could ride in the Mustang convertible on the Magic Skyway ride. Designed by Walt Disney, "The convertible would take visitors through a nearly half-mile, twelve-minute ride depicting "millions of years of life on Earth."<sup>12</sup> With the Mustang acting as the transportation through the ride, guests could explore the car's interior and get to know the car's design intimately. Ads ran in 2,600 newspapers within the United States, and both the Mustang and Lee Iacocca simultaneously

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<sup>10</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

<sup>11</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

<sup>12</sup> *Mustang World's Fair*, Ford Corporate.

appeared on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*.<sup>13</sup> Ford also made a well-paid gamble of utilizing Television for advertising. Buying time on all three networks(ABC, NBC, CBS), Ford would run an ad focusing on the price and looks of the Mustang and were seen by 29 million viewers.<sup>14</sup> It is no surprise that the nation was quickly grabbed by "Mustang Mania" as consumers rushed dealerships across the country to try and get a glimpse at the car and possibly even buy one of their own. An estimated 4 million customers would make their way into dealerships in the first weekend after its release alone; an estimated 22,000 would place an order for their very own Mustang.<sup>15</sup> By acknowledging the up-and-coming generation of young baby boomers and the growing demographic of women drivers, Ford was able to lead the pack by choosing to learn what would appeal best to these demographics and create, in turn, one of the most successful vehicles in the automotive market. After its first two years of launch, it is of no surprise that the Vice President of Ford stated, " "Mustang has come to mean more than either a horse or automobile. Mustang means fun and youth and glamour. Mustang means sunglasses and shoes and hats." ”<sup>16</sup> By utilizing potential buyers' opinions and playing up the images of glamour and fun, Ford was able to market successfully to women drivers.

## **Mustang Advertisements**

The print advertisements made by J. Walter Thompson that would follow the car's launch featured carefully drawn depictions of the Mustang as glamorous and prestigious. The emphasis on glamour was not simply a coincidence; their focus on glamour was a tool to showcase Ford's

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<sup>13</sup> Archive, Insight *Mustang: The Birth of an American Icon - Blog*..

<sup>14</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

<sup>15</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

<sup>16</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

vision of the future as an affordable luxury for a young generation. *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* by Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen examines the intriguing impact of fashion on society, “Fashion is situated within the framework of industrial development; it interacts with the rise of consumer capitalism and mass-media imagery. It is a way in which people identify themselves as individuals and collectively.”<sup>17</sup> When applying this understanding to the choices made by Ford’s advertisers it showcases that the use of high fashion in ads was specifically done to invite viewers to associate the Mustang with a high-class lifestyle. Running in over 15 publications ranging from *Esquire* to *Ladies' Home Journal*, one color ad featuring a couple dressed in formalwear poses behind a white hardtop Mustang.<sup>18</sup> The white of the Mustang contrasts the black background causing all focus to shift to the Mustang and well-dressed couple. With the young woman in a black and white ball gown with a matching headpiece and dangle earrings, the man is dressed in a tux with a paired bow tie. Using the image of a well-to-do couple out for a night on the town, the magazine ad describes the personalization capabilities of the Mustang along with its received Tiffany Award for excellence in American Design which was the first time a car had been awarded the Tiffany Gold Medal.<sup>19</sup> A color print ad set to appear in *Harper's Bazaar* in June of 1964 would have a circulation of 463,058 featuring such taglines as “Presenting Mustang... the unexpected look in cars and sunglasses” and “Try total performance for a change! Ford”.<sup>20</sup> The woman posed in a

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<sup>17</sup> Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). 81.

<sup>18</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*, *Saturday Evening Post*, May 16, 1964. [https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad\\_ford/51](https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad_ford/51)

<sup>19</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*, *Saturday Evening Post*, May 16, 1964.

<sup>20</sup> *Harper's Bazaar*, *Harper's Bazaar*, June 1, 1964.

bare wooden tree dressed in all white wears a sleeveless romper with a colorful red, orange, white, and pink headscarf and sunglasses. The man in the advertisement is posed behind the Mustang with an all-white zip-up shirt with sunglasses gazing up at the woman. As the glamorous young couple in the age engages in a flirtatious interaction, the sunglasses worn by both figures would later echo in a statement of the Vice President of Ford. Youth and freedom had become synonymous with Mustang ensuring its buyers an experience unlike any other.

Ford combined JWT's marketing approach of using the fashion and glamour of the Mustang with highly gendered fantasies for its customers. In late 1964 into 1965, a series of ads featuring the Mustang claimed that the Ford Mustang could solve personal problems by simply buying a Mustang. These ads would feature somewhat outcasts or women who wanted to regain zest in life by playing into the idea of vices and virtues. Set to publish in *Life* and *Reader's Digest*, with 7,181,000 copies expected for *Life* and 14,819,000 copies in *Reader's Digest*, a young man is featured as a mild-mannered school teacher from the Midwest. With his back facing the viewer, he is dressed in a tux with a fashionable hairstyle meeting a young woman posed in a bright pink dress with paired heels held in her hand as they stand on a beach with the Mustang parked beside them. After purchasing his Mustang, the ad notes he has "three steady girls, is on first-name terms with the best headwaiter in town, and has become society's darling."<sup>21</sup> In February and May of 1965, J. Walter Thompson published another Mustang ad in *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, *New Yorker*, and *U.S News* for a total circulation of 10,926,000 copies. This ad which focuses on Bernard, calls him a loser, someone who would cheat at Solitaire.

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[https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad\\_ford/49](https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad_ford/49)

<sup>21</sup> "Life," *Life*, November 2, 1964. [https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad\\_ford/52](https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad_ford/52)

However, the inclusion of the freshly waxed Mustang with all of its shining chrome detailing, and a young, well-dressed woman standing demurely to the side and gazing at the man whose back is to the viewer, conveys that this car is the ticket to social success.<sup>22</sup> After purchasing his Mustang, his luck, as noted, turned around, allowing him to finally win, finishing the ad with the line "Mustangers always win." The competitive nature showcased provides an image of someone who has turned their life around from misfortune to success through the act of getting first a car, then a beautiful, young woman. A woman featuring ad from February 1965 to March 1965 saw 31,067,000 copies circulated across five publications. Dressed in an elegant white gown with the sleeves billowing around her in the wind, large strings of pearls adorn her neck paired with oversized earrings and a sleek updo. Posing in front of the Mustang, she stares into the camera from the dirt road as the caption reads,

“Life was just one diaper after another until Sarah got her new Mustang. Somehow Mustang’s sensationally sophisticated looks, its standard-equipment luxuries (bucket seats, full carpeting, vinyl interior, chiffon-smooth, floor mounted transmission) made everyday cares fade far, far into the background. Suddenly there was a new gleam in her husband’s eye. (For the car? For Sarah? Both?) Now Sarah knows for sure: Mustangers have more Fun!”<sup>23</sup>

Using accepted gender roles, the narrative created by JWT and Ford acknowledges the seemingly rising issues for women and, in particular, housewives through the *Life* magazine advertisement shows the impact of increasing discussion spurred by early works like Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*, which noted feelings of dissatisfaction in life. Through the purchase of the Mustang in the advertisement's narrative, the sense of purpose and excitement has been renewed, and her

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<sup>22</sup> “Life,” *Life*, February 1, 1965 [https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad\\_ford/57](https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad_ford/57)

<sup>23</sup> “Saturday Evening Post,” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 30, 1965 [https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad\\_ford/58](https://www-jwtadvertisingamerica-amdigital-co-uk.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/Documents/Images/jwtad_ford/58)

purpose restored as a doting mother and wife. The costuming and glamour of the model and Mustang also add to the picturesque narrative that through the Mustang, by purchasing a Mustang, an individual can regain one's happiness and ease in life so that life has meaning once more. Relying on glamorous details and nuclear family and gender roles, the Mustang acts as a balance between standard social rules established in the previous decade and the wishes of a new "freed" generation ready to discuss and challenge ideas of gender roles. For women, however, their role in advertisements during this period still utilized women as accessories to both the vehicle and to men both in and out of the advertisements.

As the launch of the Mustang soon proved to be a successful bargain on the part of Ford's development team, the popularity of the Mustang had to continue to be cultivated to the changing social culture. Succeeding in gaining media attention and the eye of several new customers, the Mustang proved itself to have been worth its extensive development. With Mustang Mania sweeping the nation, the Mustang had become a crowd pleaser and a company success. The decade, however, would prove that it could not solely rely on a glamourized version of women and the idea of young mothers regaining their youth and happiness by purchasing their product. Change in social standards would once again challenge Ford to acknowledge rising Feminist sentiments as women began to question the role of advertising in stating that consumerism would solve their problems by purchasing their product. This rise in Feminism, as explored in the following chapter, would see the adaption of Feminist ideas co-opted into Ford's marketing without genuinely understanding or implementing Feminist theory.



### Ch. 3: A Modern Car for a Modern Woman

Compared to previous advertisements published in 1965, 1966 for Mustang advertising had taken a very different turn. Gone were the elaborate gowns and glamorous accessories, fashionable yet undeniably younger generation clothing was introduced. Featuring new hairstyles and warm and bright colors now often associated with the decade, young women were the focus of the ads. The Mustang would no longer rely on the idea of status and glitz that would come through the purchase of a Mustang; it was now a beacon for youth. Times were changing as the cultural rise of feminism had begun its impact on how women would be used in advertisements and how they would describe their products to them. Moments of acknowledgment of the rising sentiment for social change for women were seen in images of “single girls” and young women ready to test their new independence found through feminism. Yet this change would still have its faults as gender roles were still heavily referenced to place a limitation on women’s newfound independence.

The rise of Feminism would prove itself to be a potent influence on social and cultural standards. It at points would seemingly become all-encompassing as the rest of the world staggered to appeal to changing sentiments. Among the many industries and companies that would need to learn this lesson, Ford would adapt to meet the changes implemented by Feminist activism becoming more mainstream. Gone would be the days of strictly relying on glamour and enforcing the role of a happy mother and housewife on potential female consumers; the “independent woman” was taking the stage. Focusing on youth and the traits of being a carefree, wild young adult Ford, particularly the Mustang, had to keep up with the times. As discussed later in this chapter, the introduction of the famous *Take the Mustang Pledge* ad campaign heavily leaned into the idea of a feminist young woman with her up-to-date fashions of the

1960s. Gone were the elaborate ball gowns and pearls; this was an age of skirts and bubble flip hairstyles ready to embrace the new interests of an up-and-coming generation. However, this change in marketing would prove that despite acknowledging these changes in societal norms, Ford would still rely heavily on gendered stereotypes by often assigning a masculine representation to its product and fulfilling this need in an "independent woman" life.

By examining the continued rise of Feminism through several subgroups such as radical and liberal feminists, the creation of groups such as NOW, and moments of profound activism, women's challenge to the status quo is shown to gain momentum throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. Delving into the continued overlap between Feminism and the Ford Mustang, this chapter references such sources as *Daring to be Bad* by Alice Echols, which explains how the second wave of Feminism itself has many different branches under the label and at times even found themselves at odds with one another. *The New York Times* 1968 piece on cohabitation for men and woman as well as *When Everything Changed* by Gail Collins showcases how monumental the changes made through the advocacy of second-wave feminists truly were. Just as Feminism found itself moving into the public eye, the Mustang found itself in strong public favor with Mustang Mania sweeping the nation. With record-breaking sales, Ford had no issues giving the Mustang whatever resources needed to continue its success. Examining ad campaigns such as *Six and the Single Girl* and *Take the Mustang Pledge*, the attempts at appealing to a changing social market are analyzed to showcase that ultimately they fall flat of embracing any Feminist theory. However, Ford and J. Walter Thompson's adaptability would have to prove itself once more as public attention would later shift to environmentalist-based issues in the mid-1970s.

The following chapter will examine the continued rise of feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s. Looking at various branches of Feminism such as liberal and radical feminists, various calls for change through organizations like NOW, and other public protests Feminism's move into mainstream media soon finds its way into advertisements including Ford Mustang ads. Noting the success of the Mustang during the same time frame, a understanding of the Mustang's success and popularity is then moved into examples of later ads that would be influenced by the rising second-wave feminist movement. Examining two major ad campaigns launched featuring the taglines, "Six and the Single Girl" and "Take the Mustang Pledge" a breakdown of their contents and how they were attempting to utilize rising Feminist ideals without truly implimenting the theory and instead relied on previously established gender roles. Closing out the chapter, a change in advertisement focus from one focused on rising feminism to one concerned with environmental issues is noted.

## **The Continued Rise of Feminism**

Continuing the decade with increasing support, the feminist movement of the latter half of the 1960s and 1970s would solidify the period that would later become referred to as the second wave of Feminism. However, the movement itself was not as organized and uniform as some might believe when first learning about the second wave of Feminism. Divisions between radical and liberal Feminism, race, and economic background would prove to be a large dividing force in the movement. *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* by Alice Echols explores the unique clash and combination of individuals within the second wave. "Feminism's second wave included, often uneasily, women from across the ideological spectrum, from radical women's liberationists who rejected electoral politics to liberal feminists committed to working within the system."

<sup>1</sup> Age would even become an issue as younger feminists' more radical views caused distrust between the older, more conservative feminists. However, despite having undefined leadership on many fronts, the feminist movement's impact was highly influential on society. Summing up this seemingly tidal wave of change that impacted culture in the United States, author Gail Collins writes in her piece *When everything changed : the amazing journey of American women from 1960 to the present : a keepsake journal*, "It seemed that overnight everything that America had taken for granted about a woman's role was being called into question. Her place was in the home, and then-zap-she was applying to medical school or going for an MBA. She was supposed to defer to her husband as head of the house-except suddenly there she was, holding consciousness-raising meetings in the living room to discuss his failure to give her help with the baby or the right kind of orgasm."<sup>2</sup> Despite the changes happening over time and building through actions like women entering the workforce outside of the family home, marrying later, or having smaller families, these events, when combined, gave women a greater opportunity to expand their involvement in society.

Continued challenges to expected gender roles for women as homemakers and subservient individuals to their husbands would soon show themselves in new and seemingly improper ways. In 1967, Betty Friedan, the president of NOW, publicly stated the focus of NOW was the founding of federally funded child care centers and full income tax deduction for child care costs. Going on to adopt a Bill of Rights for women, NOW's efforts were not the only ones working for the cause. The year also saw the founding of the Chicago Women's Liberation

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<sup>1</sup> Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present: A Keepsake Journal* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2014)..

Group and the New York Radical Women group. In 1968, the *New York Times* reported on a new phenomenon called "cohabiting," which focused on several couples living mainly in New York City without a marriage certificate. Concealing identities, one couple, "Joan" and "Charles," told of their living situation and how Joan had even gone to the lengths of recruiting the mailman to convince her parents that she was rooming with a girlfriend. "It's funny... my parents have a lot of confidence in me. They think I'm a good girl." Despite this scenario not holding much of an issue in the modern-day sense, this stark difference to the previously endorsed image of the perfect suburban family was quite a shock to parents and older couples in society.

On January 15, 1968, New York feminists made a statement by bringing a dummy of "Traditional Womanhood" to the all-women's Jeanette Rankin Brigade demonstration against the war in Vietnam in Washington, D.C, and stated their intention to bury her, implementing the slogan, "Sisterhood is Powerful."<sup>3</sup> New York women's liberationists' protest against the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City would become the start of the infamous bra-burning myth of second-wave feminists. Through the efforts of various feminist organized groups, the influence and impact made on society would result in the Federal Bureau of Investigation beginning widespread infiltration of the women's movement at all levels of the organization. This would start the peak of the movement in social consciousness as a flurry of media coverage on the women's movement is made across news outlets.<sup>4</sup> The 1970s would find the feminist movement tackling abortion, sexuality, birth control, pay equality, and more. In a whirlwind of activism and

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<sup>3</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open*.

legal battles, the second wave of Feminism would continue to roll through the 1970s before beginning to lose sole media focus to other rising issues such as the environmental crisis.

## **Mustang Mania**

As the sixties continued to roll on, the decade for Ford would continue to be a success as Mustang production continued. Four months after the initial public launch, more than 100,000 cars were sold, quickly gaining its place in the top five vehicles in sales volume.<sup>5</sup> As the first model year for the Mustang was up in the fall of 1965, almost 681,000 Mustangs<sup>6</sup> had made their way into the garages of consumers. The Mustang's success would continue, resulting in the one-millionth Mustang rolling off the production floor on March 2, 1966. Setting a new car production record and being noted as the most impactful car on the economy since World War Two with \$2.8 billion in sales and \$180 million in wages.<sup>7</sup> Succeeding in reaching and appealing to its target audience, Ford's Mustang also managed to connect to consumers outside of its focus group as it began bringing first-time customers into the Ford brand.

After the first year of the Mustang's release, the automotive industry could not deny its popularity. It is no surprise that the nation was quickly grabbed by "Mustang Mania" as consumers rushed dealerships across the country to try and get a glimpse at the car and possibly even buy one of their own. An estimated 4 million customers would make their way into dealerships in the first weekend after its release alone; an estimated 22,000 would place an order

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<sup>5</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

<sup>6</sup> Archive Insight, *Mustang: The Birth of an American Icon - Blog*.

<sup>7</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

for their very own Mustang.<sup>8</sup> In this rush of interest, stories began arising about just how serious this Mustang Mania was. From the East to West Coast, the Mustang quickly proved itself a success among consumers. Opening additional assembly lines for the Mustang in New Jersey and California<sup>9</sup>, the company's gamble would prove to be well made.

“A Chicago dealer had to lock the doors of the Mustangs in his showroom, because so many people were trying to crowd into the cars at one time and they were in danger of injuring themselves. In Prescott, Arkansas, population 2,500, more than 450 high school students showed up en masse and nearly caused a riot trying to see the new car. A Pittsburgh dealer with a Mustang on the wash rack could not get the car down because of the crowd below. In Garland, Texas, 15 people bid to get the only showroom model with the winner sleeping in the car to make sure it was not sold before his check cleared the next day.”<sup>10</sup>

The age of customers began to shift to the younger generation showing that Ford had seemingly secured brand loyalty with younger generations as it had with previous generations. “The median age of purchasers was 31, with more than 28% of the buyers younger than 25 years old, compared to age 42 for the median purchaser of the regular Ford car.”<sup>11</sup> Single people also began to create a stronger hold in the consumer demographic when previously Ford had mostly seen customers who had started families or were couples. The comparison, when broken down, showed that 35% of Mustang buyers were single compared to 9% of typical Ford buyers. When questioning customers on their reasoning for purchasing into the Ford family, particularly the Mustang, the image of class and style at an affordable price was mentioned the most, proving

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<sup>8</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

<sup>9</sup> Archive Insight, *Mustang: The Birth of an American Icon - Blog*.

<sup>10</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

<sup>11</sup> *A Market Looking for a Car*, Ford Corporate.

that Ford's efforts in carefully testing the balance of style and affordability were the correct choice.

## Six and the Single Girl<sup>12</sup>

Although ads from this period were beginning to be critiqued by women at this time for the portrayal and use of women in advertising, the addressing of these issues was not taken seriously as changes to the portrayal of women soon turned to the idea of selling products to women instead of using women to sell products. The brand Love's Baby Soft was a fragrance that launched in 1974 that's ads centered around the phrase, "Because innocence is sexier than you think." The innocence referenced in the ads was questioned by consumers of being targeted to women or young girls.<sup>13</sup> This disturbing sexualization of women began a discussion of

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<sup>12</sup> In the following sections, secondary sources focusing on advertisement history and the periods of the 1960s- 1970s advertising were examined and discussed by influential authors such as Thomas Frank. Examining the first period of "counterculture" in the 1960's and its impact on advertising, helps to make the connections between rising cultural movements and changes that become gimmicks utilized by corporations to sell products, or for this paper the use of Feminist theory and imagery in Ford advertisements. Frank writes in his first chapter, that his study is, "concerned with the genesis of counterculture as an enduring commercial myth, the titanic symbolic clash of hip and square that recurs throughout post-sixties culture." Thomas, Frank *The Conquest of Cool : Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. 32. Another impactful secondary source, Mary Rizzo, *Class Acts: Young Men and the Rise of Lifestyle* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2015). addresses the connection between rebellion in young men and marketing campaigns. Rizzo states in her introduction "By analyzing debates within marketing theory, I trace the evolution of the concept of lifestyle, an idea that marketers and advertisers have seized since the 1960s to assert that class (and other identities, like age) are individual consumer choices, divorced from material reality." (4) When applying this observation to my own research, lifestyle marketing can be directly compared to the appropriation of an "independent woman" in advertising to female customers.

<sup>13</sup> Megan Garber, "This Is No Shape for a Girl': The Troubling Sexism of 1970s Ad Campaigns," The Atlantic (Atlantic Media Company, June 15, 2015), <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/06/advertising-1970s-womens-movement/395897/>.



criticisms regarding the infantilizing of women and the sexualization of young girls. Another example was the famous marketing campaign introduced by the cigarette brand Virginia Slims attempted to utilize feminist sentiments in their advertisements with the slogan "You've Come A Long Way, Baby" in reference to the ongoing feminist movement and women's rights. However, while attempting to "empower" women, the slogan still relied on patronizing nicknames such as "Baby." Feminists rightly called out this targeted advertisement to women for attempted pandering.<sup>14</sup> A variety of ads using the slogan calls back to the inequalities that women previously faced are not an issue for women of the sixties allowing them to showcase their independence through smoking.

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<sup>14</sup> Karen Harris, "'You've Come a Long Way, Baby': Virginia Slims and the Women's Lib Movement," History Daily (History Daily, March 21, 2019), <https://historydaily.org/youve-come-a-long-way-baby-virginia-slims-and-the-womens-lib-movement>



## Sweetheart of the Supermarket Set

Mustang is a sweetheart no matter how you look at it. Aesthetically. Economically. Its good looks are standard equipment. As are bucket seats, all-vinyl interiors, full carpeting. And economy is a Mustang specialty... particularly when it comes with six-cylinder emphasis. Your Mustang with its "getaway" six races to

the market, drops off the kids, picks up the man in your life... all in one gas-saving breath. Step out of this one in the parking lot and the whole supermarket recognizes you as a girl who's as smart as she is pretty. As a matter of fact, you are! You've earned your "A" in Home Economics.



In a marketing campaign featuring the 1966 line of six-cylinder Mustangs, a series of print ads featured young Mustang women owners using their vehicles in various situations. In "Sweetheart of the Supermarket Set," a young woman is seen carrying groceries and flowers peeking over the top of the items at the camera. In the description, the ad states that the Mustang is "a sweetheart" whether you look at it aesthetically, economically, with its good looks being standard equipment. The "getaway" six allows young women to drive to the market, drop off the kids, pick up the man in your life all in one gas-saving breath. Finishing the advertisement

acknowledging that the girl who drives a Mustang is as smart as she is pretty, Ford states that "You've earned your "A" in Home Economics."<sup>15</sup> Creating this imagery of the Mustang being the perfect choice for a young woman as a mode of transportation and a sign of great taste, they are setting it up as the ideal car for a young woman by appealing to a young woman's fashion sense and overall "sensible nature". Its compatibility for women drivers in its performance, gas mileage, and style carefully rides a balance of female independence while still having a gendered role for women as mothers and devoted partners to men in their lives. By balancing the idea of an independent woman lifestyle while also fulfilling gender roles, the "getaway" six can be a car for independence while also being a tool for women to aid men and their families in their travel needs. Inviting the target audience of young women to set a "date" to come to test-drive comes full circle with the idea that the car can become your "sweetheart." In a similar ad titled "Six and the single girl" published in Life magazine on March 11, 1966, the idea of explicitly marketing towards single young women are addressed directly.

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<sup>15</sup>Click Americana, "The 1966 Ford Mustang: A Car for Women? - Click Americana," Click Americana vintage & retro memories (Synchronista LLC, January 3, 2021), <https://clickamericana.com/topics/culture-and-lifestyle/cars-trucks/1966-ford-mustang-cars>.



## Six and the single girl.

What makes a quiet, sensible girl like Joan fall in love with a Mustang? Not simply Mustang's steely good looks or smooth, racy lines. Not even the hard-to-resist features like adjustable bucket seats, wall-to-wall carpeting, sports steering wheel, and floor-mounted shift.

What really broke down Joan's reserve was the solid practicality of Mustang's deep breathing Six. She knew she could

trust this husky, suave brute of an engine to squire her around town, drive her to the mountains for a weekend, even drop her off for dinner with the girls (who will never guess how little Mustang costs her to own and run). Extraordinarily considerate of a girl's feelings...and her pocketbook.

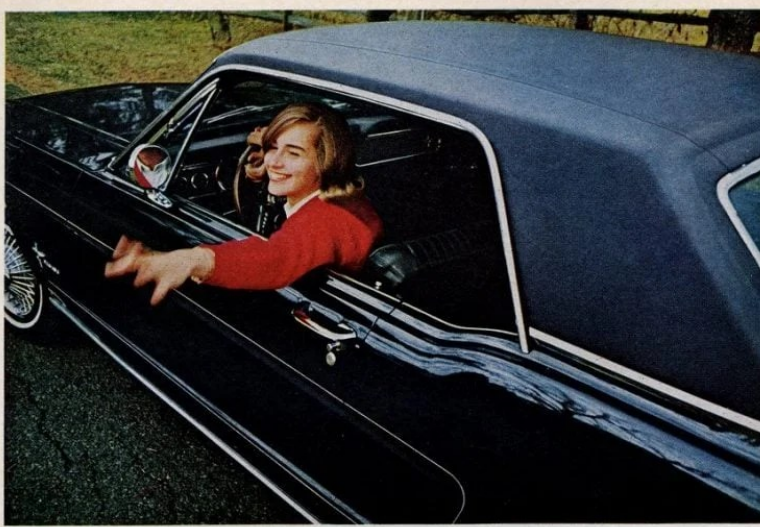
Take a test drive and see if you should give in to Mustang because of sheer Six appeal. Smart girls do.



The ad tells the readers the story of Joan, who has fallen in love with a Mustang, not just because of its good looks or features, but its practicality. Leaning on the side of her Mustang with flowers in her hand that cover the bottom half of her face, the number six is made out of the same yellow flowers that contrast highly with the green paint of the Mustang. The text of the ad features several innuendoes and lines anthropomorphizing the car. Describing Joan's choice to pick the Mustang as her car the ad notes, "She knew she could trust this husky, suave brute of an engine to squire her around town,". Being driven around by the Mustang fulfills the role of a male chauffeur to ensure that Joan is safe and protected. Continuing in the description the ad reads, "Extraordinarily considerate of a girl's feelings... and her pocketbook" plays up the humanization of the Mustang, describing the humanized car as sensitive and caring for his



partner, the female driver. Finally, "Take a test drive and see if you should give in to Mustang because of sheer Six appeal. Smart girls do." The car has become humanized, as traits of a romantic partner have been given to the Mustang with the bonus of innuendo of "sex" appeal made to the straight-six engine running in the model. For the single woman in this scenario, the ad insinuates that the car takes a man's place for the women too stubborn to fall into traditional gender roles.



**So you chose a Six for your Mustang!  
Congratulations.**

**Now don't forget to wave when  
you pass your gas station...**

(someday you might have a flat)

You're behind the wheel of one of the snappiest, brightest, best-looking, common sense cars in the world today: Mustang with its big, hot 200-cu. in. Six.

This Mustang makes gas economy standard . . . is real bright about adjusting its own brakes . . . is dead right about not making unnecessary trips for routine maintenance (just about every 6000 miles or 6 months is enough). And it maneuvers easily into tight parking spots.

Nobody will deny you're driving one of the most dashing cars around. With no-cost trappings like bucket seats. Floor-mounted, fully synchronized, 3-speed shift. Vinyl trim. Door-to-door carpeting.

That's your basic Mustang . . . dash plus savvy. You can add many, many more options for extra dash. Say, that's you, isn't it? Aren't you glad you took the time for a test drive at your Ford Dealer's!



**MUSTANG**

A PRODUCT OF  
**Ford**

In the last of this Mustang, six series of ads ran on March 7, 1966; the title read, "So you chose a Six for your Mustang! Congratulations." Immediately opening with the line, "Now don't forget to wave when you pass your gas station... (someday you might have a flat)" Waving out the window as she drives by, the young woman smiles (assumably at the gas station attendant). Not wasting any time for innuendos, the rest of the ad continues with, "You're behind the wheel of one of the snappiest, brightest, best-looking, common sense cars in the world today: Mustang with its big, hot 200 cubic-inch Six." Comparing the car once again to a potential partner, by using descriptive terms like best-looking and common sense, the Mustang has become the correct choice in a life partner who is both attractive and sensible. The Mustang's engine of a 200 cubic-inch Six is used as a way to measure a man's masculinity, which by noting the large engine makes it more powerful and therefore masculine. Noting its maneuverability and easy parking, the vehicle is described as dashing and savvy by finishing the ad with the realization that it is now the reader of the ad who has been driving the Mustang the entire time, prompting the reader to have received the compliments and fantastic offers.

### **Take the Mustang Pledge**

take the  
**MUSTANG  
PLEDGE!**



**I WILL NOT...**

I will not sell tickets to all the people who want to ride in my '67 Mustang.

I will not keep the neighbors up all night by playing my Mustang's stereo tape player.

I will not yawn when people talk about the performance of other cars.

I will not show off my Mustang's overhead console by turning on its map lights (at least, not in the daytime, anyway).

**I WILL...**

I will tell the truth about my Mustang's low price and not let people think I paid extra for bucket seats, vinyl interior, plush carpeting and all those other no-cost extras.

I will spend the money I save with Mustang on a good cause... myself.

I will love, honor and obey the Convenience Control Panel when its lights tell me to fasten seat belts and release the parking brake.

I will stick to my diet even though my Mustang's Tilt-Away steering wheel is so adjustable.

I will keep the "helpless-female" look by shifting manually only when I'm driving alone. All other times I will let the SelectShift work automatically.

I will catch up on my diary... one of these days.

 **MUSTANG**


As one of the most iconic ads from this period, a marketing campaign using the idea of the "Mustang Pledge" would feature a well-to-do young woman who has recently purchased a Mustang. Underneath the blue hardtop Mustang image, this 1967 ad breaks down what and what not to do as a young woman with a Mustang.

"I will not sell tickets to all the people who want to ride in my '67 Mustang. I will not keep the neighbors up all night by playing my Mustang's stereo tape player. I will not yawn when people talk about the performance of other cars. I will not show off my Mustang's overhead console by turning on its map lights (at least, not in the daytime anyway). I will tell the truth about my Mustang's low price and not let people think I paid extra for bucket seats, vinyl interior, plush carpeting and all those other no-cost extras. I will spend the money I save with Mustang on a good cause... myself. I will love, honor, and obey the Convenience Control Panel when its lights tell me to fasten seat belts and

release the parking brake. I will stick to my diet even though my Mustang's Tilt-Away steering wheel is so adjustable. I will keep the "helpless-female" look by shifting manually only when I'm driving alone. All other times I will let the SelectShift work automatically. I will catch up on my diary... one of these days."

In contrast to the earlier ads of the Mustang, the high fashion used to convey the glamour of the Mustang has been replaced with the idea of youth and embracing the wild abandon of being a young adult. Although there is not a couple in the ad like earlier ads, this ad's pledge do's and don'ts play with the idea that the Mustang will provide a new lease on life. Allowing a young woman to drive about by herself, enjoy the nightlife, and not so subtly push the features provided by Ford in the Mustang. Taking the saved money to spend on herself, for possibly makeup, clothing, or accessories, the image of a young woman is shaped to appease the male gaze even when it is not present. The jab at the young woman keeping her diet even though she doesn't have to with the adjustable wheel, the male gaze can also be seen in the commentary. To keep from threatening a male presence further, the young woman is advised not to use the manual shift with men around to keep the "helpless-female" look. Perhaps to not break the idea that women must still rely on men to be escorted around as they cannot use a manual, or probably that using a manual transmission is too phallic for a woman to know how to use. Being the last note to remember as a Mustang woman, keeping a diary brings an image of writing about dates and men among the recounting of her personal life who may be of interest to the woman. After reading this ad, there is the sense that there was an attempt to create and use a "modern-woman" in an advertisement to market to young women, but there are heavy uses of sexism and expected gender roles. When put into a time frame when Women's Liberation or second-wave feminism was gaining traction in society, it is a prime example of complaints made by women who held issues with the way women were portrayed in advertising. Depicting their freedoms as only accessible through the purchasing of a Mustang, the independence and liberation for women that



feminists wanted was completely ignored in favor of consumerism. For Ford, the co-option of feminist concepts were not truly embraced, resulting in hollow representations of women's rights. Speaking of freedom and liberation for women through the purchase of the Mustang, Ford still noted that a man or masculine energy had to be present in either a partner or in the car itself to contain the "liberated woman."

The portrayal of women in advertising from Ford did not only have issues in print but also on the small screen. As television began to become a commodity in homes across the U.S, many brands found themselves eager to advertise both in print and in media. In a commercial from 1967, the featured woman named Pauline, who, according to the narrator, felt "trapped in a gilded cage until she flew to take the Mustang Pledge." Running out of an elevator, Pauline soon makes her way to the Ford dealer, choosing a Mustang Hardtop. Driving out into a dirt road in a rather bare landscape, Pauline is met by a cowboy who, when seeing her, quickly tips his hat. The last shot sees his horse tied to the back of the Mustang as the couple drives off.<sup>16</sup> Seemingly acting as a counterpart to the ad featuring Norman, this ad seems to base itself on a fantasy for women who can escape the daily hustle of downtown life and instead arrive in a wild open plain in which a rugged and robust cowboy can become her beau. These portrayals of women in television and print ads through the planned marketing to women consumers when analyzed are tone-deaf due to a lack of women in the development of marketing for the branding of Ford. Just as proper consumer research or a lack of can cause a marketing campaign's success or failure, the lack of appropriate representation for women in a market that historically has used them to sell

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<sup>16</sup>8 *Great Ford Mustang Commercials from 1967*. YouTube . YouTube, 2016.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Vuq7Lhxfcs>.

products was a fumble in reaching more consumers in a group that was beginning to be recognized as possible buyers in the automotive industry.

**A little gas and a lot of class.**  
**New Ford Mustang II **MPG** 34mpg**



Mustang II **MPG** Ghia.

Official U.S. Government EPA dynamometer tests:

**34mpg** (4-speed manual)  
 highway 23mpg city

**30mpg** (automatic)  
 highway 21mpg city

America's best-selling sports luxury car now gives you the advantage of increased mileage. Official EPA highway tests showed 34 miles to a gallon (23 mpg city) with a 4-speed manual transmission. Even with automatic transmission, the new Mustang II MPG got better mileage than many imports. It even has a lower sticker price than any foreign competitor.

**Mustang II **MPG** \$3,529\***  
 \$2,748 less than Datsun 280Z  
 \$158 less than Toyota Celica  
 \$209 less than Opel Manta  
 \$974 less than VW Dasher  
 \$1,413 less than VW Scirocco  
 And \$319 less than Monza Towne Coupe with its 5-speed option, which is required to achieve its best mileage results.

\*Your mileage may vary with how you drive.  
 \*Base sticker price of Mustang II MPG Hardtop excluding title, taxes, destination and dealer prep. Price comparisons based on sticker prices. Because destination charges are extra on all cars and dealer prep is extra on all cars except GM and Toyota cars, the price difference may vary in some areas.



Left, Mustang II **MPG** Hardtop • Right, Mustang II **MPG** 2+2

Along with good mileage you get the standard Mustang II equipment: tachometer, rack and pinion steering, steel-belted radials, floor-mounted 4-speed stick—and the same low Mustang II sticker price. Mustang II MPG models include the hardtop, 2+2, and the elegant Ghia with its opera windows and vinyl roof standard. Order now for quick delivery.

**Ford means value. And prices may never be lower. See your local Ford Dealer.**

**FORD MUSTANG II**  
 FORD DIVISION 

Creating a variety of taglines over the years through print ads and television, JWT ensured that Ford's marketing could pivot to whatever situation was thrown at them. In an ad appearing from July to September 1975, an ad featuring the Mustang II read, "A little gas and a lot of class." with the new edition of the Official U.S. Government EPA dynamometer tests of 34 mpg (4-speed manual) and 30mpg (automatic). The ability to adapt to a changing market is not only a sign of success. Ford would especially need this ability to adapt in later years as climate concerns

would turn the automotive industry on its head through the effects of the oil crisis and the introduction of motor vehicle regulations in the 1970s. Still, it would also become necessary to continue its profitability in one of the most challenging eras the automotive industry would ever face.

## **Conclusion: Forward for a Fossil-Free Future**

Calling for equality in society backed by law, the second wave of feminism would come to represent the rise in demand for women's rights over their reproductive and personal autonomy protected by law. Women's roles in society had turned from a more organized and rigid family unit of the fifties into an evolving and active role in society in the workplace and the home. Challenging a woman's perceived role in society as subservient to men, second-wave feminists rallied in various organizations and subgroups under the label of feminism. The flooding of feminism activism and rallying in popular media would soon saturate everyday life with imagery and coverage of feminist activists and protests. Over time, this traceable change showcases how as the second-wave feminist movement began to gain traction through the mid-sixties into the seventies, Ford took note of changing social changes and sentiments by utilizing changing fashions and ideas of freedom and independence.

Thanks to feminism, women critiqued their objectification in advertising. With critiques rising, Ford's attempts at reaching this newfound consumer group would fall flat as ads targeted explicitly towards women would still utilize gender roles and stereotypes to market the car. Instead of marketing focusing on the value or functionality of the vehicle, the focus on how "femininity" could be incorporated as the new objective. Tactics included highlighting easier maneuverability alluding to women's challenge to be safe drivers. The patriarchal society also used masculinity to turn the vehicle into a "partner." The inclusion of a male "figure" justifies a woman driving and using the car within the norms of a male-dominated society. The allure of the Mustang for older women utilized a combination of tactics; for married women, it guaranteed the return of youth before becoming a married woman with duties of childcare and housewife.

The glamour of youth would also attract your husband's eye from retaining a youthful image and having a sporty and luxurious car for your husband to ogle and keep him interested as is expected from a wife. In television, Ford applied these tactics to create narratives where women were not happy in the hustle and bustle of city life and instead wished to escape into a fantasy where a willing man could rescue them to take them away from it all. In the opposite case where Ford used a male point of view, women would often end up buying the Mustang as women would inevitably come along after purchasing the Mustang because the man's status had improved socially—having gone from an initial approach of using glamour to showcase the Mustang, to one that attempted to utilize changing sentiments inspired by the efforts of the feminist movement, Ford's attempt at change in how women were used and viewed as customers fell short of any substantial change in characterization. Either reduced to an object to be won or a young woman in search of the Mrs. title, a lack of understanding of women's wish for representation would continue to be a point of contention for several years.

### **Environmental Issues and the Motor Industry Response**

By the 1970s, Ford's biggest concerns would shift to compliance with new environmental regulations. The passing of the 1970 clean air act began the creation and legalization on federal and state levels to control emissions. "Four major regulatory programs affecting stationary sources were initiated: the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS, pronounced "knacks"), State Implementation Plans (SIPs), New Source Performance Standards (NSPS), and National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAPs). Furthermore, the enforcement authority was substantially expanded. The adoption of this very important legislation occurred at approximately the same time as the National Environmental Policy Act that established the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)."

<sup>1</sup> A widely known agency, the EPA, would create national air quality standards, define air pollution levels, and set auto maintenance regulations. Founded on December 2, 1970, the same day when William D. Ruckelshaus was sworn in as the first administrator of the EPA, the agency was modeled after a 37 point message from President Nixon—requesting such things as launching federally-funded research to reduce automobile pollution, asking for national air quality standards and stringent guidelines to lower motor vehicle emissions, and ordering a clean-up of federal facilities that had fouled air and water.<sup>2</sup> Enlisting the newly formed EPA to assist with these points, the agency would research pollutants and their effects while also enforcing water and air quality standards for specific pollutants.

Sworn in as administrator, William D. Ruckelshaus took the responsibility of organizing and leading the new environmental protection efforts. But to Ruckelshaus, this was not only protecting the environment but protecting the American people from the effects of pollution. In many cities around the nation, citizens complained about the air quality that would irritate the lungs and eyes while restricting visibility and smelling acidic. This threat to individuals' health, especially those in more major risk categories such as the elderly and young, must be addressed.

“For the first few months, Ruckelshaus and his staff heard advice from many arenas. To many, the ecological ideology underlying environmental activism suggested an intermedium approach to pollution control. That is, instead of one branch of EPA focusing on water pollution, another on-air, a third on solid waste, and so forth, regulators would look at the entire pollution problem and attempt to create a holistic solution. For example,

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<sup>1</sup> “Evolution of the Clean Air Act,” EPA (Environmental Protection Agency, January 3, 2017), <https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/evolution-clean-air-act#:~:text=The%20enactment%20of%20the%20Clean,industrial>.

<sup>2</sup> The Origins of EPA <https://www.epa.gov/history/origins-epa#:~:text=Administrator%20Ruckelshaus%20was%20confirmed%20by,of%20EPA%20in%20July%201970>.

regulators would seek solutions that would clean the air without further degrading water or land with extracted pollutants.”<sup>3</sup>

By creating a governmental agency that faced environmental issues on the local and national levels, the next task was to gain the public's support when making environmental decisions. Through achieving support, the EPA could earn a favorable reputation of properly addressing ecological issues and be trusted to make decisions regarding the environment in future endeavors.

In a press release on June 4, 1973, the EPA announcement on auto maintenance regulations would "set regulations requiring warning systems, such as dashboard lights or buzzers, on 1975 and later model cars to alert drivers to malfunctions or the need for maintenance on certain air pollution control systems.”<sup>4</sup> This implementation would ensure that if any regulating emissions systems installed in vehicles required maintenance at any time of their use, the sensors would quickly alert the owner to have any issues fixed, reducing any pollution released during its malfunction. Declaring all new vehicles sold in the United States must be certified as meeting EPA auto emission standards in the 1970s and subject to maintenance regulations. The development of future cars and their maintenance shops would soon have to evolve to meet these standards. These regulations would also positively affect consumers as their

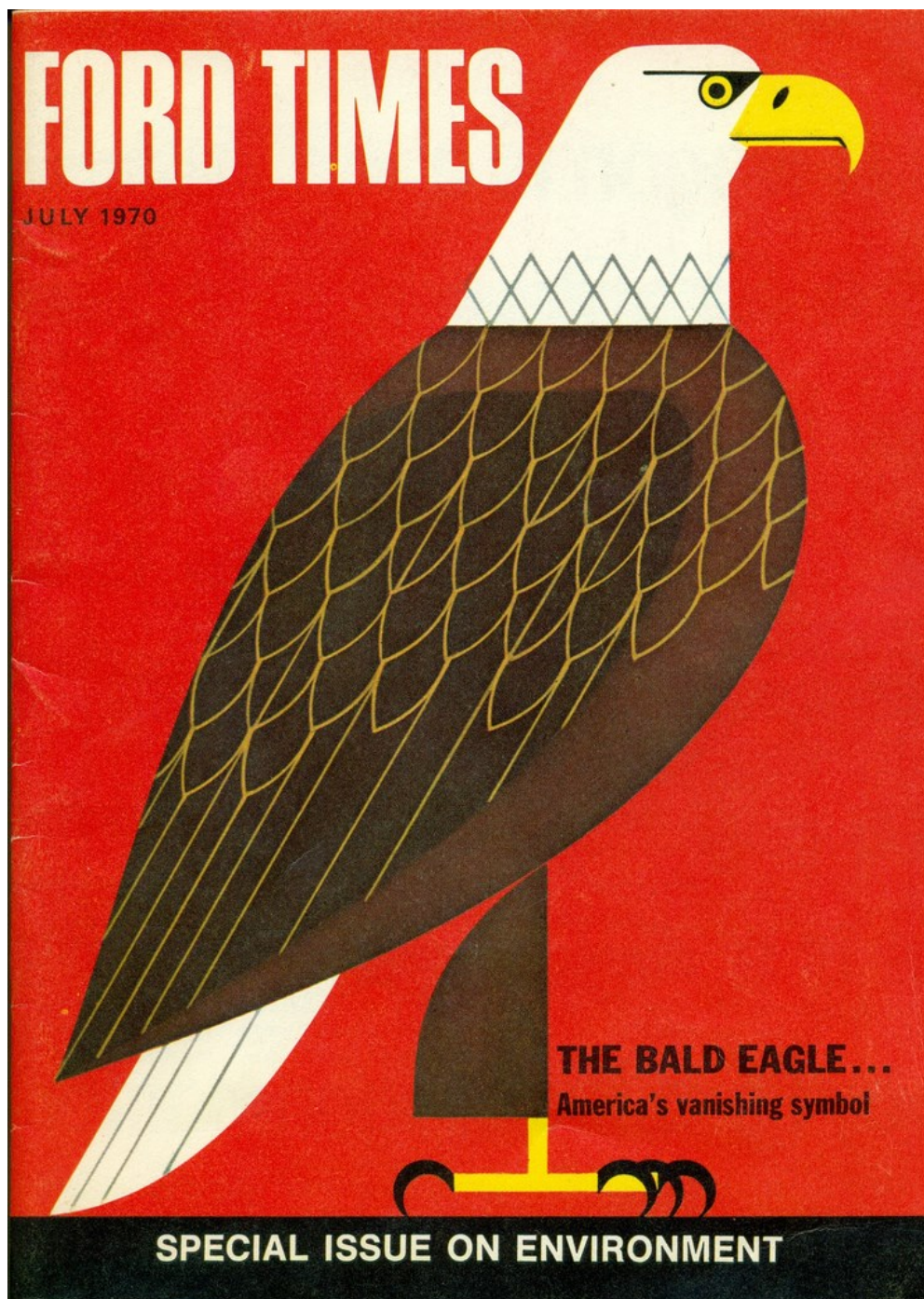
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<sup>3</sup> Dennis C Williams, “The Guardian: EPA's Formative Years, 1970-1973,” EPA (Environmental Protection Agency, September 6, 2016), <https://archive.epa.gov/epa/aboutepa/guardian-epas-formative-years-1970-1973.html>.

<sup>4</sup> EPA press release, "EPA Sets Auto Maintenance Regulations," EPA (Environmental Protection Agency, August 11, 2016), <https://archive.epa.gov/epa/aboutepa/epa-sets-auto-maintenance-regulations.html>.



vehicles would be able to travel longer distances per gallon and have more regulation for pollution that could have lasting health effects on themselves and their families.



*July 1970 Issue of Ford Times*



In 1970, the clean air act would push manufacturers into addressing the automotive industry's impact on the planet. Through efforts to address rising public concerns, the Ford Marketing team would begin publishing and releasing a series of booklets and pamphlets regarding Ford's response to the issue and how it would implement change. In a July 1970 issue of *Ford Times*, the issue dedicated itself as a "Special Issue on Environment," which featured America's symbol of a Bald Eagle on the cover.<sup>5</sup> In that same year, Ford released "Your Car and Clean Air," a booklet released in an attempt from the Ford Motor Company to reassure its customers that they were engaging in research to eliminate "offending" emissions. It focused on reducing air pollution from processing metals, vinyl, and other automotive parts. Ford also noted a discussion of fuel efficiency and emissions.<sup>6</sup> Every new model year, automobile manufacturers took more and more efforts to lessen the impact of vehicles on the environment. In its introduction, the booklet produced by the automobile manufacturers association ensures its readers that models starting in 1963 had been equipped with measures to limit their released emissions. Ending its introduction with a note that it can provide tips in aiding motorists to understand and reduce their impact on the environment, the booklet transitions into a section focusing on vehicle emissions and the current and future goals for emissions.

In an interesting note, the booklet notes, "As 1971 cars emerge from assembly plants across the country, hydrocarbon emissions from the average new vehicle will have been lowered

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<sup>5</sup> *Ford Times "Special Issue on Environment"* (Dearborn, MI: Ford Motor Company, 1970), <https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-collections/artifact/475951#slide=gs-464901>.

<sup>6</sup> Ford Motor Company, *Your Car and Clean Air: A National Report From The Automobile Manufacturers Association* (Dearborn, MI: Automobile Manufacturers Association, 1970), <https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-collections/artifact/365198>.

by about 80 percent and carbon monoxide by more than 65 percent compared with 1962 models. This means that five 1971 model cars should produce no more hydrocarbons than one 1962 vehicle, and three 1971 model cars should produce less carbon monoxide than one car built in 1962, the last year before nationwide controls were introduced.”<sup>7</sup> When considering the importance of holding up to new governmental standards, it is no surprise that companies had to get in line under the consequence of disobedience in following the new rules and social backlash.

Interestingly enough, the pamphlet, when considering the possible future track of emissions in the United States, relied on the fact that "The total amount of hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide emissions from auto-mobiles already has passed its peak in the nation's air and will continue to decline as newer vehicles replace those without controls, even with normal increases in car population."<sup>8</sup> Possibly a white lie to appease a demanding public, or perhaps a genuine belief, Ford's response to environmental issues would continue alongside developing all future Ford products. In 1973, Ford's updated booklet on their commitment to the clean air act would include a bright green landscape with a young family standing next to their vehicle.<sup>9</sup> Including articles about air pollution causes, federal legislation, alternative power sources, and ways for the public to assist, Ford's marketing had once again utilized their marketing in

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<sup>7</sup> Ford Motor Company, *Your Car and Clean Air*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ford Motor Company, *Your Car and Clean Air*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ford Motor Company, *The Clean Air Quest* (Dearborn, MI: Ford Motor Company, 1973), <https://www.thehenryford.org/collections-and-research/digital-collections/artifact/366269#slide=gs-212043>.

response to a social movement that demanded change while ensuring the trustability of their branding in the public's eye.

## **The Oil Crisis and the Mustang II**

Responding to the general public and the government-created agencies tasked with addressing the impact of the automotive and oil industry on the environment and health of individuals, Ford's marketing had to reassure the general public that their vehicles were built with environmentally conscious features. From limiting how many emissions could be produced by a car to any emissions produced during the actual manufacturing stage, Ford was tasked with responsibility from the highest authority agencies to be held to their promises of improving. This task of changing production and by-product of Ford vehicles had to be addressed to aid public image through marketing. Using ads to showcase their mpg's and new environmentally conscious models of the future, Ford had to continue to make itself relevant in a consumer market that the EPA forced to become more aware of its effect on the world and a budget of consumers purchasing vehicles in a market with unstable fuel sources. "The first CAFE (corporate average fuel efficiency) standard, issued in 1975, required manufacturers to achieve a fleet average of 18 mpg for 1978 model cars. A company failing to achieve the CAFE would be fined \$2 for each one-tenth of a mile above the mandated level multiplied by the total number of vehicles the company sold that year in the United States."<sup>10</sup> Faced with little to no other option, under threat of backlash from public opinion, and possible lawsuits from shareholders for not abiding by federal law, standards began to be met throughout the industry.

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<sup>10</sup> James M. Rubenstein, *Making and Selling Cars: Innovation and Change in the U.S. Automotive Industry* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). 231.

Through a variety of tactics to meet these standards, vehicles themselves began to change in construction. Hoping to increase fuel efficiency, front-wheel-drive transaxles were introduced, saving three hundred pounds. Steel soon was replaced with plastic and aluminum in the bumpers, hood, and body panels.<sup>11</sup> However, their delay inaction would prove to be a fatal mistake as the European market soon arrived on the scene with strong numbers and popularity in the market. As Ford began to scramble to meet standards and somehow appeal to the public needs, the Mustang continued to be a staple in the Ford lineup.



*Introducing Ford Mustang II. The right car at the right time, 1974*

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<sup>11</sup> James M., Rubenstein. *Making and Selling Cars*, 232.

However, the unfortunate Mustang II would not receive the same public reaction as its gen one predecessor. With an initial debut in 1974, priced at \$3,081 with 1.1 million produced, the second iteration of the Mustang would be based on the rather unfavorable Ford Pinto subcompact.<sup>12</sup> With ads debuting the car with the tagline, "The right car at the right time," the line couldn't have been more ironic. Critics were also quick to note that the Mustang II was "neither fast nor very good at handling."<sup>13</sup> A far cry from the outburst of positive reviews from the original Mustang's debut, Mustang II would prove itself to be a failure. The issues would continue as in 1976; Ford would recall the Mustang II due to a defect in the steering mechanism; the car's design also held the fuel tank in the rear much like the Pinto that would explode if in an accident where the car was hit from the rear.<sup>14</sup> Ford would soon face large amounts of profit loss, Chrysler would veer dangerously close to bankruptcy, and GM would quickly face the long-term harm of downsizing. Having ended the 1970's much like how it had entered into the 1960's Ford would find itself in an uphill battle to right wrongs, including revitalizing the Mustang, which had almost come to a permanent end after the disaster of the Mustang II.

Calls for environmental protection and regulation began to gather large amounts of support globally during the 1960s and 1970s. With oil consumption rising and domestic production declining, oil was quickly becoming a necessary import. In 1973 an oil embargo by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) led to fuel shortages and sky-

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<sup>12</sup> Rob Sass, "1974-78 Ford Mustang II," The New York Times (The New York Times, May 28, 2006), <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/28/automobiles/28RUST.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Rob Sass, "1974-78 Ford Mustang II,".

<sup>14</sup> Rob Sass, "1974-78 Ford Mustang II,".

high prices for the remainder of the decade.<sup>15</sup> Three months after the embargo was announced, the oil price jumped from three dollars per barrel to twelve. With prices hugely inflated and shortages becoming more common, oil shortages faced the United States with a new occurrence. Lines forming around gas stations and leaders at local, state, and national levels calling for measures of conserving energy would hit everyone from consumers to the United States automotive industry itself.

“U.S. motorists panicked as gasoline supplies dwindled during the winter of 1973-74. Each U.S gasoline station received a small quantity of fuel, which ran out early in the day. Long lines formed at gas stations, and some motorists waited all night for fuel. Gasoline was rationed by license plate number (cars with licenses ending in an odd number could buy only on odd-numbered days). All stations were closed on Sundays. Topping off the tank was prohibited, so before pumping, attendants verified that the fuel gauge read at least half empty.”<sup>16</sup>

This shortage would cause a lag in manufacturing, and the Japanese market would soon outpace the United States auto industry by producing more fuel-efficient and compact vehicles.<sup>17</sup> With a combination of new environmental regulations and a lack of oil, Ford, like other American automotive companies' best option was to adapt by creating more fuel-efficient and smaller vehicles. The result of this change would be seen in the classes of cars that the U.S automotive industry built during the decade. "U.S. cars settled into five classes in the 1970s: full-size or standard (about 215 inches or 5.4 meters), intermediate (200 inches or 5 meters), compact (185 inches or 4.7 meters), subcompact (170 inches or 4.3 meters), and specialty (a variety of sizes). U.S. companies built around 40-45 percent full sized, 20-25 percent intermediate, 10-15

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<sup>15</sup> History.com Editors, ed., “Energy Crisis (1970s),” History.com (A&E Television Networks, August 30, 2010), <https://www.history.com/topics/1970s/energy-crisis>.

<sup>16</sup> Rubenstein, James M.. *Making and Selling Cars*, 230.

<sup>17</sup> History.com Editors, ed., “Energy Crisis (1970s),”.

percent compact, 5-10 percent subcompact, and 10-15 percent specialty. The 15 percent of the market held by foreign companies in the early 1970s was almost entirely in the subcompact class."<sup>18</sup> In an economy where consumers could often no longer afford the larger family cars that were popular in days past, marketing had to embrace these factors and help Ford move into a new age, just as Iacocca had helped move Ford from a post-war consumer base to one of an up and coming baby boom generation.

The Mustang, since its initial release, has become one of Ford's most recognizable vehicles. With over six generations of Mustangs and a sixtieth anniversary coming up in 2024, this pony car has shown that its appeal was no mistake. The following two decades would see Ford slowly adapting to its new market resulting in a strong stance in the 1990s, marking its place in the automotive world once more. Women's involvement in the Ford company and its marketing still has room to improve. On Ford's website diversity page, the listed timeline is sadly scarce. In one section regarding the 1950s-1970s, only seven bullet points are listed. Two mention women joining the company; the remaining three address inclusivity, equal opportunity, and "inclusive use of human resources."<sup>19</sup> In the section listed for the 1980s, 1990's and today, one of the closing blurbs reads,

“ Efforts throughout the latter part of the century expanded the definition of diversity and focused on respect and inclusion. The majority of Ford employees

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<sup>18</sup> James M., Rubenstein. *Making and Selling*, 224.

<sup>19</sup> “Our History of Diversity and Inclusion Ford's History of Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce - Ford,” Ford's History of Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce - Ford (Ford Motor Company), accessed April 29, 2021, <http://ophelia.sdsu.edu:8080/ford/06-08-2014/careers/diversity/diversity-history-440p@releaseId=1244754317559.html?&cocode=US>.

worldwide have participated in training that teaches and encourages sensitivity, respect and communication in the workplace.”<sup>20</sup>

With a recent increase in coverage and discussion in feminist theory and practice, women and other minorities have once again brought issues of discrimination and representation into focus. Understanding the past challenges that women faced in representation, such as the Mustang marketing campaign, can give insight into how representation is delivered today and in what ways.

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<sup>20</sup> “Our History of Diversity and Inclusion Ford's History of Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce - Ford,” Ford's History of Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce – Ford. (Ford Motor Company), accessed April 29, 2021, <http://ophelia.sdsu.edu:8080/ford/06-08-2014/careers/diversity/diversity-history-440p@releaseId=1244754317559.html?&cocode=US>.



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