

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Bitch: A Case Study

STUDENT: Shelley M. Kimrey

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This thesis explores how the term bitch functions as an ideograph in a heavily mediated, third wave moment. Bitch is important to study due to its potentially negative implications for women and feminism. The study attempts to expand rhetorical scholarship's current understanding of not only the ideograph, but third wave feminism and the current mediated moment. This thesis uses Oprah Winfrey's announcement to ban the word bitch from her network, OWN (Oprah Winfrey Network), as a case study. I argue that the media that responded to Winfrey's announcement contributed to a single, overarching narrative that reinforced that the word bitch is harmful to women.

This thesis begins with Chapter One, which is an introduction and rationale that explains why the prevalence of bitch in a mediated society is worthy of study. Chapter Two is a review of the literature that explores the history of the word bitch and a consideration of third wave feminism. In Chapter Three, I review the methodology that guides this study by discussing feminist rhetorical criticism, how previous scholarship has treated mediated texts, and consideration of the ideograph. In Chapter Four, I analyze Oprah Winfrey's ban of the word bitch from OWN. In Chapter Five, I articulate how bitch functioned as an ideograph, the role the media played in the case study, and a consideration of implications for rhetorical scholarship and directions of future research.