Females' Identity

To this day, females struggle to protect their individuality in a society that is governed by men. Women compete to voice their visions and obtain equal rights. In the media and society, female issues are overlooked, therefore neglected. In the novel, The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood, female characters struggle to gain power. This unbalance arises from the dominance of men, the lack of freedom, and the destruction of individuality, in which female characters face the hardship of obtaining their true sense of self. The dominance of men in The Republic of Gilead causes female characters to struggle in obtaining their true identity. As Gilead arises, all women lose control, giving all men the ability to thrive. Males obtain power and dominance to construct a society that destroys women. The women of Gilead are removed from their jobs and all the money that was once theirs is now transferred to the males of the household. The patriarchy is put into place society is put into place when Offred’s privileges are being taken away: “[I've been fired]” (Atwood 205). Offred’s job has been taken away from her with no explanation. Moira explains to Offred that “[any] account with an F on it instead of an M” (206). Offred is in shock after understanding what is going on. Her sense of power is stripped when she's told “[women] can’t hold property anymore” (206). Offred has lost her job, money, and power that was once a right she held. She is left with nothing and is no longer an independent woman. Offred’s husband, Luke is given complete control over her finances. This demonstrates the dominance of men in this new society and the gender roles that are applied throughout. Instead of fighting for women's rights, Luke easily comes to accept this new reality since he is not the one going to struggle. Men are seen to be more powerful and knowledgeable in this new society, leaving the women behind with no voice or power. With strict control and the dominance of men, The Republic Of Gilead devalues women limiting them from finding their true sense of self. Furthermore, the lack of freedom the women of Gilead face challenges their ability to obtain their true sense of self. Women's freedom is solely dictated by a newly implemented role. In the Republic of Gilead, freedom is viewed differently. Handmaids are women that are only used for breeding purposes. Before being sent off to work in a household, handmaids are kept trapped in schools where Aunts mentor and train them to succeed in their role.(do I keep or remove. During one of the Handmaid's lessons, Aunt Lydia states that “[there] is more than one kind of freedom...freedom to and freedom from” (28). The women of Gilead are exposed to two types of freedom. In this society, women are free of violence, sexual insults, and toxic body image, however, as a woman, they also do not have the freedom to work, love or do as they wish. With this sudden lack of freedom, women struggle the most to regain their identity. They are no longer able to dress, speak, or act as they wish. Serena Joy, once successful and hardworking, loses it all. She was once a free working woman pursuing her dream as a singer and at once it all gets taken away from her. Serena is now left feeling disconnected from her past. She loses herself and her freedom to express her identity. All women of Gilead struggle to obtain their true sense of self due to the lack of freedom. In addition, the destruction of women's individuality causes one to struggle in obtaining their true sense of self. Gilead attempts to remove individuality through clothing, names, and overall economic status. Women are given specific clothing depending on their roles in society which minimizes the ability of women to express themselves. Also, personalized names are forbidden to label and control women. Imprisoned as a Handmaid, Offred states “[my] name isn't Offered, I have another name, which nobody uses now because it's forbidden” (95). Offred's real name has been banned, making her feel as if she is disappearing and losing herself. As handmaids transfer from one household to another,

they are given new names to correspond to their new commander. By continuously being transferred and given multiple different names, the Handmaids are left feeling lost and unsure of who they are as a person. The narrator's name may be Offered now, but soon enough there will be another Offred to follow. Offred has no true identity. She is defined by her reproductive abilities, not her personality or state of mind. The Handmaids only feel worthy of their bodies and reproductive system otherwise they are of no importance to society. Their former self and identity are forced to be removed in order to adapt to this new regime. The women of Gilead are no longer seen as individuals but only as objects and pawns. Ultimately, in the novel, The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood female characters struggle to obtain a sense of self after The Republic Of Gilead is put into place. Through understanding the dominance of men, the lack of freedom, and the destruction of individuality that the women face, they lose their sense of self. Identity is what shapes one's individuality. With friends, family, makeup, names, clothing, and freedom one can build a sense of self and uniqueness. But once all those luxuries are taken away, it makes it hard for an individual to achieve a sense of identity, causing them to lose themselves and their purpose.