

EXPLORING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THIRD-WAVE FEMINISM AND SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM

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ABSTRACT

The two waves of feminism emerged in different historical contexts and have distinct goals, strategies, and areas of focus. While second-wave feminism concentrated on issues such as reproductive rights and workplace discrimination, third-wave feminism emerged in response to perceived limitations and aimed to be more inclusive and intersectional. Third-wave feminism emphasizes diversity, inclusivity, and the intersectionality of women's experiences, acknowledging the importance of race, class, sexual orientation, and disability. It celebrates women's sexuality, advocates for body positivity, and actively engages with technology and media platforms. Moreover, third-wave feminism takes a global perspective, recognizing that women's issues transcend national boundaries. The paper attempts to examine how third-wave feminism celebrates sexuality and body positivity, actively engages with technology and media, and adopts a global perspective on women's issues. While recognizing the evolving nature of feminism, this abstract presents a broad overview of the distinctions between these two waves, acknowledging their contributions to the feminist movement.

KEYWORDS: *Third-Wave Feminism, Second-Wave Feminism, Historical Context, Goals, Strategies, Intersectionality, Diversity, Inclusivity, Sexuality, Global Perspective.*

INTRODUCTION

In the course of human history, feminism has existed for a very long time. Although there is not a universally accepted definition, feminism may be summed up as the movement to eradicate gender inequality and put an end to discrimination against women. Numerous feminist movements exist that fit this objective. Feminism may be broken down into "waves" rather than discussing them separately from one another (Barrett & Phillips, 1992). Although it has several shortcomings, the wave metaphor is the most typical way to explain the movements of feminism. A complex history and chronology of beliefs, principles, and individuals who frequently disagree with one another can be oversimplified by this. In light of this simplification, it could seem as though the history of feminism follows a simple progression. It is much rougher in actuality. There are several overlapping and conflicting sub-movements of feminism. The first wave of feminism smoothly gave way to the second. However, feminists have never been renowned for having a unified point of view, so it should not be surprising that the shift from the second to the third wave of feminists has created a glaring generational gap (Barrett & Phillips, 1992). Self-determination, bodily autonomy, and a decrease in violence against women are undoubtedly the shared goals of second and third wave

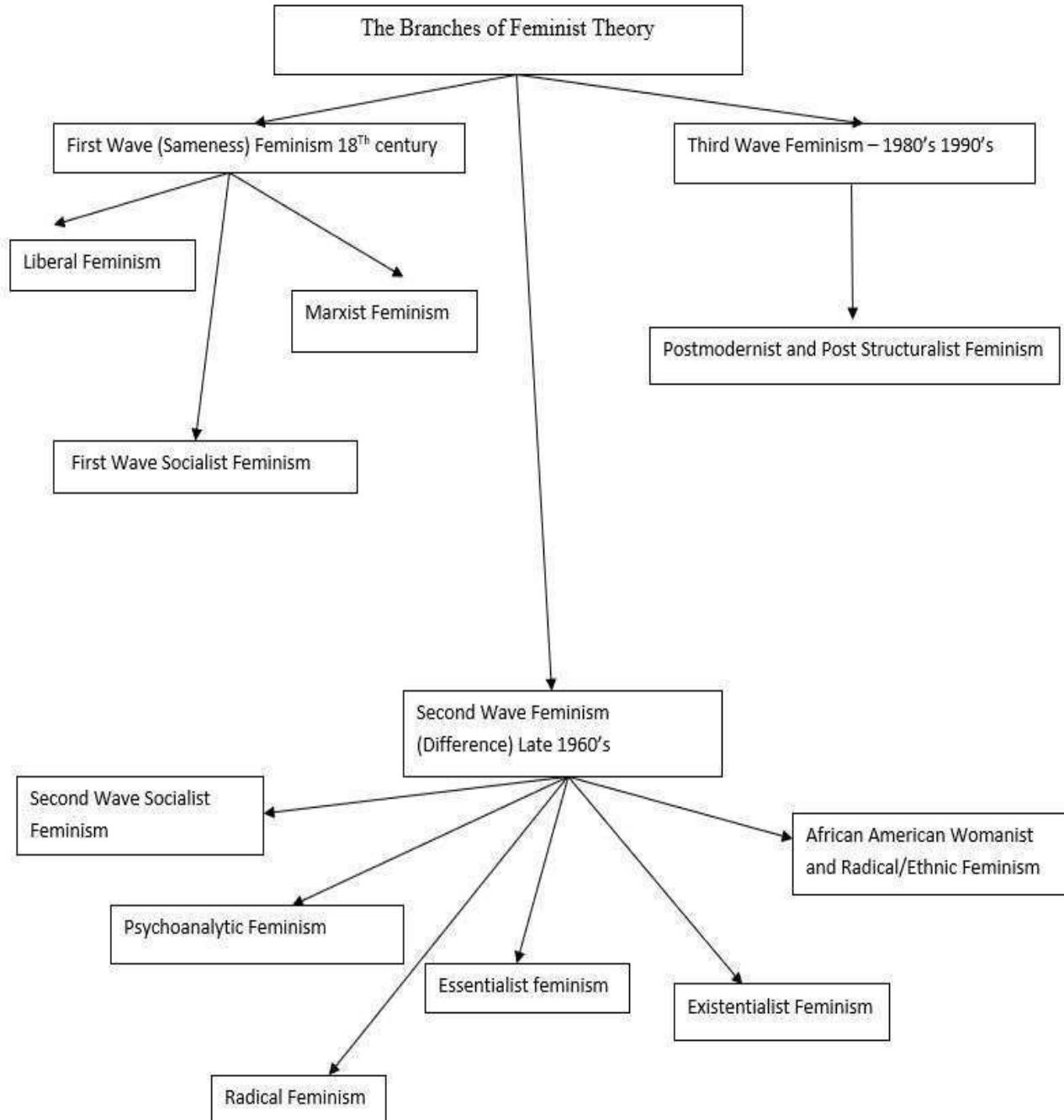
feminists (Barrett & Phillips, 1992). However, they may compete against one another in a way that is far from sisterly due to variations in focus and style. "Second wave feminism was about sisterhood; third wave feminism was about difference. The two can never be reconciled. In light of this assertion, the essay analyses and explains the reasons for and ways in which the third and second generations of feminism vary from one another.

THE WAVES OF FEMINISM

There is no agreement within the academic and scholarly field on how to describe these three waves of modern feminism or on how they relate to women's issues and movements that took place before the late nineteenth century. It is despite the fact that the idea of three stages of modern feminism is frequently used. The fourth wave of feminism is a new silhouette that is appearing on the horizon, making the terrain even more challenging to maneuver. Some scholars have attempted to trace the origins of feminism back to the time of Sappho (c. 570 BCE), Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179), or Christine de Pisan in the mediaeval era (d. 1434). The current women's liberation movement undoubtedly has its roots in Olympes de Gouge (d. 1791), Mary Wollstonecraft (d. 1797), and Jane Austen (d. 1817). These individuals were all supporters of equal sexual empowerment and equal rights for

women, equal intellect, and fundamental human potential and capabilities (Rampton, 2015). However, the campaigns for women's equal rights did not come together into one cohesive

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the first wave of feminism evolved as a result of urban industrial capitalism and liberal, socialist concepts. The goal of



and self-aware movement until the late nineteenth century, or rather, in a succession of movements.

this wave was to bring women additional opportunities, with a focus on suffrage in particular. The Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, where 300 men and women united to promote the cause

of women's equality, served as the wave's formal beginning. Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted the Seneca Falls Declaration, outlining the political objectives of the new movement (d. 1902) (Rampton, 2015). Early on, feminism was associated with the abolitionist and temperance movements. It also gave voice to activists who are now well-known, such as the African-American Sojourner Truth, who exclaimed, "Ain't I a woman?" and died in 1883. In Victorian America, it was common for women to behave in incredibly "unladylike" ways, which threatened the "cult of domesticity" (Rampton, 2015). These acts included speaking in public, participating in demonstrations, and serving time in jail. Discussions regarding voting and women's participation in politics led to a look at the differences between men and women as they were regarded at the time. Some claim that because women are held to higher moral standards than men, their involvement in politics and civic affairs will result in better public behaviour. The first wave in the late 19th century was the first significant political movement in the Western world, not the first manifestation of feminist principles (Levenstein, 2020). The groundbreaking *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792 (Levenstein, 2020). About 200 ladies gathered at a chapel in 1848. They came up with 12 resolutions requesting certain rights, such as the ability to vote. Early feminists made reproductive rights a key concern. The 19th amendment, which granted women the right to vote, was eventually ratified by the US Congress in 1920 as a result of years of feminist campaigning (Levenstein, 2020). Almost 30 years have passed since New Zealand became the first nation to grant women the right to vote (Rampton, 2015). So, the objective of first-wave feminism was very straightforward. To have society acknowledge that women are not objects to be used as property (Levenstein, 2020). Although abolitionists, the pioneers of the first wave of feminism were attacked for concentrating on the rights of white women. The beginning of the existing and all of the women's rights movements was therefore initiated by this wave.

Second-wave feminism gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s (Hughes & Cohen, 2012). It built on the first wave of feminism and questioned what women's position in society should be. Drawing inspiration from the Civil Rights movement and anti-Vietnam War protests, activists emphasized the barriers that prevented women from achieving their full potential (Hughes & Cohen, 2012). This requires a deeper look at the reasons for women's subjugation. The conventional roles of men and women in the household were called into question. Further research was conducted on queer theory. The Equal Pay Act of 1963, *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, and other Supreme Court decisions were some of this era's most important victories

(Hughes & Cohen, 2012). This wave developed with the anti-war and civil rights movements as well as the rising self-awareness of several minority groups all over the world. The New Left was growing, and the second wave's voice had become more extreme (Hughes & Cohen, 2012). At this stage, sexuality and reproductive rights were the most important topics, and the movement concentrated a lot of its emphasis on getting the Equal Rights Amendment, which guarantees social equality regardless of sex, passed into the Constitution. The Miss America competitions in Atlantic City in 1968 and 1969 served as the catalyst for this phase's start (Hughes & Cohen, 2012). This can be understood by the fact that feminists mocked what they perceived as a demeaning "cattle parade" that reduced women to mere objects of beauty and was ruled by a patriarchy that wanted to keep them at home or in menial, low-paying occupations (Hughes & Cohen, 2012). It can be explained by the example of the radical New York organization known as the Redstockings, who held a counter pageant in which they crowned a sheep as Miss America and trashed "oppressive" feminine objects, including bras, girdles, high heels, cosmetics, and false eyelashes. The second wave of feminism was easily neglected and perceived as less urgent than, for example, Black Power or attempts to end the Vietnam War, because it found voice among so many other social movements (Springer, 2002). Women-only organizations like NOW and "awareness-raising" clubs were created in response by feminists. Feminists argued for their right to the spotlight in books like "The BITCH Manifesto" and "Sisterhood is Powerful" (Springer, 2002).

The second wave began to link the oppression of women with larger critiques of patriarchy, capitalism, normative heterosexuality, and the woman's role as wife and mother. It was more theoretical in nature and was founded on a merger of neo-Marxism and psychoanalytical theory. The concepts of sex and gender were distinguished. This was with the former being a biological concept and the latter being a social construct that changes over time and across cultures (Hughes & Cohen, 2012). The creation of women-only places and the idea that working with other women creates a unique dynamic that is not feasible in mixed-group settings and eventually benefits the entire world may also be argued to be strains of this complex and diverse "wave." Some believed that women were more compassionate, cooperative, inclusive, peaceful, nurturing, democratic, and holistic in their approach to problem resolution than men. This belief may have been influenced by women's long history of "subjugation" or by the biological makeup of women. The word "eco-feminism" was created to express the idea that women were innately

proponents of the environment due to their biological ties to the planet and moon cycles.

As women went into the 1990s, they had more authority and rights as a result of the institutional successes of second-wave feminism (Levenstein, 2020). The ability to consider other facets of their identity allowed them to embrace independence and revolt. Reclaiming was the theme of the time. It can be understood by the significant cultural touchstones that include The Guerilla Girls, riot girls, and Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*. Many women were more open in how they spoke, behaved, and dressed about their sexuality. Second-wave feminists, many of whom had opposed conventional femininity, occasionally found this perplexing. There were several ideas and little movements at this time, but there was only one "rule": that there were no rules. It meant that a woman should make her own life decisions.

Third-wave feminism also developed a stronger racial consciousness. "Intersectionality" was first used in 1989 by gender and critical-race researcher Kimberle Crenshaw (Gills, 2015). The phrase describes how many forms of oppression, such as those based on race and gender, interact with one another. The third wave of feminism gave more attention to racial inequities within gender, which were mainly disregarded or neglected by the mainstream first and second waves. The term "third-wave feminism" was first used in 1992 by Rebecca Walker, a black bisexual woman of 23 years of age (Gills, 2015). As the internet became more widely used, it became increasingly simpler to hear thoughts and ideas from feminists all around the world. Most third-wavers reject the term "feminist," which they view as constrictive and exclusive, and refuse to identify as "feminists" (Gills, 2015). Therefore it can be said that global, multicultural, and anti-simple-solutions nature of girl-feminism leads it to reject artificial categories of identity, gender, and sexuality. Differences in race, class, sexual orientation, and other categories are praised and acknowledged as dynamic, situational, and provisional due to its transversal politics. Reality is conceptualized more in terms of performance within circumstances than it is in terms of permanent structures and power relations. So it's possible to say that Third wave feminism knocked down barriers.

DEBATES BETWEEN SECOND AND THIRD WAVES OF FEMINISM

The 19th-century battle for the fundamental legal and political rights to own property, get a divorce, and vote is referred to as "first-wave feminism" (Dean, 2009) In 1920, the right to vote put a stop to it. Second-wave feminism reached its height in the early 1970s with such victories as the passage of Title IX for equal educational opportunities, the passage of the

Equal Rights Amendment by both houses of Congress (it was never ratified), and the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision affirming a woman's right to choose an abortion (Dean, 2009). Numerous subgroups made up second-wave feminism. These people identified as liberals. A significant portion of Ruth Bader Ginsberg's career was spent promoting formal gender equality in the law. The Neo-Marxist philosophy of socialist feminism, which focused on the exploitation of female workers and the economy, Gender disparities and the need to appreciate both women's and men's perspectives were the main themes of Carol Gilligan's cultural feminism (Dean, 2009). The goal of radical feminists was to destabilize patriarchal hierarchies. Aspornography is connected to gender violence, Andrea Dworkin opposed it (Dean, 2009).

Since 1990, a lot of younger women have shown hostility to second-wave feminism, notwithstanding its variety (Grady, 2018). It can be said that the focus on women as victims and the exclusive concerns of the white middle class are rejected by these third-wave feminists (Henry, 2004). Some women identify as neo-feminists because they believe that the term feminist implies a dislike towards males. Third-wave feminists want to integrate gender issues with wider social issues, be more inclusive, and embrace the global community. The greater objective of women's physical, emotional, spiritual, political, economic, and social wellness is, in their eyes, a goal that includes reproductive justice (Hirsch & Keller, 2015). They do not really enjoy hearing that they should feel oppressed since they have grown up feeling empowered. They are often positive about sex and sexuality and seek satisfaction in a healthy work-life balance rather than merely receiving the same treatment as men once did.

With the aid of examples from ordinary life, it is possible to comprehend the distinction between the second and third waves of feminism. According to Minnesota law, both parties are guilty of adultery and may receive a term of up to one year in jail, a fine of up to \$3,000, or both when a married woman engages in sexual activity with a man other than her husband, whether they are both married or not (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016). Men who are married and have affairs are just guilty of infidelity, which is not a felony in Minnesota. Second-wave feminists built women's centers, rape crisis centers, and services for rape prevention in addition to passing legislation against violence against women. Philadelphia hosted the initial "Take Back the Night" march in 1975 (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016). Modern third-wave feminists are shifting the emphasis from women being victims to the offenders. They think that males need to change in order for women to stop being raped, rather than the other way around. At several campuses, "Real guys don't rape" campaigns are an attempt to

alter the male culture, with males playing a leading role (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016). In a lecture on crime prevention at York University in Toronto last January, police constable Michael Sanguinetti said, "Women should avoid dressing like whores in order to not be assaulted," setting up a controversy (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016). He later expressed regret. Ten weeks later, 3,000 women participated in a "Slut Walk" in Toronto to defend their freedom to wear whatever they choose and to feel secure.

Second-wave workers fought to get rid of glass ceilings and impediments to entrance in the workplace. They implemented family-friendly innovations including flexible hours, parental leave, on-site childcare, and nursing rooms (Gills, 2015). According to recent feminists, both men and women strive to have happy lives with time for their personal relationships, careers, and other facets of life (Levenstein, 2020). They are rejecting the notion that working the hardest and earning the most money at the top of the corporate ladder makes people the happiest people. It can be stated that if second-wave feminists interpret this as a rejection, they might need to move past it. It is not like they have built a direct path to bliss (Levenstein, 2020). It is difficult to have it all. To remove obstacles from the walk of progress, everyone must plan out their own route while exchanging ideas and combining efforts. The argument between the second and third waves of feminism is therefore a result of the dramatic disparity between the two waves. It might be argued that combining the second wave's collective action with the third wave's individual agency would only strengthen the force for change. This is especially true for those women who are unable to speak up for themselves. The third wave of feminism broadened the objectives to include intersectionality, inclusion, and body positivity. The second wave of feminism concentrated largely on gender equality, reproductive rights, and employment discrimination. Second wave feminists used tactics like awareness-raising, grassroots activism, and legal challenges, whereas third wave feminists used tactics like internet activism, intersectional advocacy, and cultural critique. We may better appreciate the strides achieved in tackling gender inequities and the ongoing attempts to address the complexity of identity and oppression in modern feminist movements if we have an understanding of the growth and variations in aims and techniques across different waves.

CONCLUSION

Second wave feminism has come under fire for its exclusivity, essentialism, and constrained multidisciplinary approach. The individuality, consumerism, and lack of political solidarity of third wave feminism drew criticism. The second wave of feminism focused on sexuality and transgender

inclusion, whereas the third wave of feminism discussed intersectionality, sex work, and consent. To appreciate each wave's benefits and drawbacks and influence the continued development of feminist theory and activity, it is essential to be aware of these criticisms and arguments.

It can therefore be said that radicals, progressives, liberals, and centrists have all played a part in the history of feminism. The two generations of feminism played its part in different ways. In addition to reproductive rights, job opportunities, and legal safeguards, the second wave focused on achieving gender equality in other areas as well. By doing so, it aimed to subvert the limitations placed on women by conventional gender roles and conventions. Race, sexual orientation, class, and other intersecting identities were included to the third wave's aspirations for feminism. It put a strong emphasis on supporting inclusive and varied feminist movements, speaking out for underrepresented voices, and addressing identity difficulties.

It is chock-full of offshoot movements and defensive counter movements. That is a key component of what it is to be both an intellectual tradition and a social movement, and feminism is currently doing both with a beautiful and amazing vibrancy. The extreme differences in the approaches of the waves of feminism, especially the second and third makes it difficult to work together. A shift towards a more inclusive and intersectional strategy may be seen in the development of feminism from the second wave to the third wave. While the second wave set the stage for tackling gender inequality, the third wave broadened the focus to include the complexity of oppression and identity. Feminist activism has changed as a result of incorporating other viewpoints and the use of technology, allowing activists to become more visible and connected on a worldwide scale. Understanding the development of feminism and influencing future feminist movements depend greatly on recognising the successes, difficulties, and ongoing discussions of both waves. Feminists should acknowledge the tremendous work that each wave has contributed to the cause and get ready to continue doing more work rather than gorging on their own. Co-mentoring recognizes that feminists from all generations may benefit from one another. It is a reversion to hierarchy to believe that second-wavers will instruct and third-wavers will absorb from them. Women of all generations and waves of feminism may advance by engaging with one another.

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