3

The Rhetorical Shaping of Gender: Women's Movements in America

The truth is that none of us can be liberated if other groups are not.

—GLORIA STEINEM

In the last chapter we saw that communication in society influences individuals' gender identities. Equally important is how individuals' communication shapes society's views of masculinity and femininity. In this chapter and the next one we'll look closely at how individuals have changed cultural views of gender and men and women.

Once women could not vote in America; now they can. Once women routinely experienced discrimination on the job; now we have laws that prohibit sex discrimination in employment. Changes such as these do not just happen. Instead, they grow out of rhetorical movements that alter cultural understandings of gender and, with that, the rights, privileges, and roles available to women and men. Insight into communication, gender, and culture is enhanced by knowledge of how rhetorical movements have sculpted and continue to sculpt social views of men and women.

Rhetoric is persuasion; rhetorical movements are collective efforts that use persuasion to challenge and change existing attitudes, laws, and policies. In this chapter we will consider a number of women's movements that have altered the meaning, roles, status, and opportunities of women in America. In Chapter 4 we'll explore men's movements that seek to persuade society to particular views of masculinity. As we survey these rhetorical movements, you'll discover that they are anything but uniform. They advocate diverse views of gender and pursue a range of goals. Insight into the range of rhetorical movements about gender may allow you to define more clearly where your own values and goals place you within the range of movements about gender.

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THREE WAVES OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN AMERICA

A widely held misconception is that the women's movement in America began in the 1960s. This, however, disregards over a century's history in which women's movements had significant impact. It also implies that the women's movement is a single thing, when actually there have been and are multiple women's movements.

Rhetorical movements to define women's nature and rights have occurred in three waves. During each wave, two distinct ideologies have informed movement goals and efforts at change. One ideology, called **liberal feminism,** holds that women and men are alike and equal in most respects. Therefore, goes the reasoning, they should have the same rights, roles, and opportunities. A second, quite different ideology, referred to as **cultural feminism,** holds that women and men are essentially different. If the sexes differ in important ways, then they should have different rights, roles, and opportunities. We'll see that these conflicting ideologies lead to diverse rhetorical goals and strategies.

THE FIRST WAVE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Roughly spanning the years from 1840 to 1925, the first wave of women's movements included both liberal and cultural branches. Ironically, the conflicting views of these two movements worked together to change the status and rights of women in society.

The Women's Rights Movement

What we now call the **women's rights movement**—activism aimed at enlarging women's political rights—grew out of women's efforts in other reform movements. Many women in the early 1800s participated in movements to end slavery (abolition) and ban consumption of alcohol (temperance, or prohibition) (Fields, 2003; Million, 2003; Yellin, 1990). These early reformers discovered that their efforts to instigate changes in society were hampered by their lack of a legitimate public voice. They realized that a prerequisite for their political action was securing the right to speak and vote so that they had a voice in public life (Sarkela, Ross, & Lowe, 2003).

In 1840 Lucretia Coffin Mott was a representative to the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London (Campbell, 1989a), but she was not allowed to participate, because she was a woman. At the convention, Mott met Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who had accompanied her husband (who was a delegate), and the two women discussed the unfairness of Mott's exclusion. In the years that followed, Mott and Stanton worked with others to organize the first women's rights convention.

Held in New York in 1848, the Seneca Falls Convention marked the beginning of women's vocal efforts to secure basic rights in America—rights granted to White men by the Constitution. Lucretia Coffin Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, Mary Anne McClintock, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton collaboratively wrote the keynote address, entitled the "Declaration of Sentiments." Ingeniously modeled on the Declaration of Independence, the speech, delivered by Stanton, proclaimed (Campbell, 1989b, p. 34):

> *We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

Continuing in the language of the Declaration of Independence, Stanton catalogued specific grievances women had suffered, including denial of the right to vote, exclusion from most forms of higher education, restrictions on employment, and denial of property rights upon marriage. Following Stanton's oration, 32 men and 68 women signed a petition supporting a number of rights for women. Instrumental to passage of the petition was the support of former slave Frederick Douglass (Campbell, 1989b).

Although Douglass supported women's rights, it does not signify widespread participation of Black citizens in the women's rights movement. Initially, there were strong links between abolitionist efforts and women's rights. However, the links dissolved as many abolitionists became convinced that the movement for Black men's voting rights had to precede women's suffrage. In addition, many Black women thought the women's rights movement focused on White women's circumstances and ignored grievous differences caused by race. Forced to choose between allegiance to their race and allegiance to their sex, most Black women of the era chose race. Thus, the women's rights movement became almost exclusively White in its membership and interests.

The Seneca Falls Convention did not have immediate political impact. Women's efforts to secure the right to vote based on the argument that the Constitution defined suffrage as a right of all individuals fell on deaf ears. At that time in America's history, women were still not considered individuals but rather the property of men. In 1872, two years after Black men received the right to vote, Susan B. Anthony and other women attempted to cast votes at polls but were turned away and arrested. Not until 48 years later would women gain the right to vote, in part as a result of a second and quite distinct women's movement.

■ The Cult of Domesticity

Many women in the 1800s did not believe that women and men were equal and alike in important respects. As cultural feminists they believed that, compared to

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Ain't I a Woman?

Isabella Van Wagenen was born as a slave in Ulster County, New York, in the late 1700s. After she was emancipated, Van Wagenen moved to New York City and became a Pentecostal preacher at the age of 46. She preached throughout Northern states using the new name she gave herself: Sojourner of God's Truth. She preached in favor of temperance, women's rights, and the abolition of slavery.

On May 28, 1851, Truth attended a women's rights meeting in Akron, Ohio. Throughout the morning she listened to speeches that focused on White women's concerns. Here the historical account splits. Some historians (Painter, 1996) state that Sojourner did not speak at the meeting and someone else gave the speech that is widely credited to Truth. Other scholars state that Sojourner Truth delivered the speech, "Ain't I a Woman?" Whether given by Truth or another person, the speech pointed out the ways in which White women's situations and oppression are different from those of Black women. The speech eloquently voiced the double oppression suffered by Black women of the time (Folb, 1985; Hine & Thompson, 1998; hooks, 1981).

> That man over there says that woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place. And ain't I a woman?
>
> I have ploughed, and I planted, and gathered into barns. . . . And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard. And ain't I a woman?

men, women were more moral, nurturing, concerned about others, and committed to harmony. Believing the ideal of "true womanhood" (Welter, 1966) to be domesticity, these women were part of a movement feminists now refer to as the *cult of domesticity.*

Belief in women's moral virtue led cultural feminists to form various reform organizations to fight for prohibition, child labor laws, rights of women prisoners, and policies of peace. Like members of the women's rights movement, the cult of domesticity focused on the lives and concerns of White women. Their efforts at reform largely neglected the fact that Black women confronted far more basic injustices and suffered fundamental deprivations of liberty, food, shelter, and medical care.

Ironically, the conservative ideology of the cult of domesticity was critical to securing women's right to vote. Movement members argued that allowing women to vote would curb the corruption of political life. Women's moral virtue, they claimed, would reform the political world that had been debased by immoral men. This rhetorical strategy was instrumental to women's struggle to gain political

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Reproductive Rights

Birth control has been a priority of women's movements. In the 19th century, Elizabeth Cady Stanton insisted that "voluntary motherhood" was a prerequisite of women's freedom (Gordon, 1976). Later, Margaret Sanger emerged as the most visible proponent of women's access to birth control. Her work as a nurse and midwife made her painfully aware that many women, particularly immigrants and poor women, died in childbirth or as a result of illegal abortions (Chesler, 1992). In speeches throughout America and Europe, Sanger advocated birth control for women. In her periodical publication, *The Woman Rebel,* Sanger declared, "A woman's body belongs to herself alone. It is her body. It does not belong to the Church. It does not belong to the United States of America or any other government on the face of the earth. . . . Enforced motherhood is the most complete denial of a woman's right to life and liberty" (1914, p. 1).

During the second wave of feminism in the United States, feminists again protested for safe, accessible birth control and abortion for all women. In 1969, a group of feminists disrupted the New York state legislature's expert hearing on abortion reform—the experts who had been invited to address the legislature consisted of 14 men and one nun (Pollitt, 2000). The protesters insisted that none of the experts had personal experience with what reproductive choices mean. Four years later the landmark case of *Roe v. Wade* established abortion as a woman's right. Yet, 30 years after that case was decided, abortion is still not available to all women who are citizens of the United States. In 1997, Congress banned access to privately funded abortions at overseas military hospitals, prohibited insurance for federal employees from covering abortion, and greatly restricted abortions for Medicaid recipients ("*Roe v. Wade* at twenty-five," 1998).

Not all feminists believe that women should have access to abortion. Groups such as Feminists for Life argue that abortion is wrong and antithetical to feminine values.

franchise. On August 26, 1920, the constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote was passed.

Although the combined force of the cultural and liberal women's movements was necessary to win suffrage, the deep ideological chasm between these two groups was not resolved. Nor did securing voting rights immediately fuel further efforts to enlarge women's rights, roles, influence, and opportunities. Few women exercised their hard-won right to vote, and in 1925 an amendment to regulate child labor failed to be ratified, signaling the close of the first wave of women's movements.

After this, women's movements in the United States were relatively dormant for nearly 35 years. This time of quiescence in women's movements resulted from several factors. First, America's attention was concentrated on two world wars. During that time, women joined the labor force in record numbers to maintain the economy while many men were at war. Between 1940 and 1944, 6 million women went to work—a 500% increase in the number of women in paid labor (Harrison, 1988; Klein, 1984).

In postwar America men's professional opportunities expanded tremendously while women's shrank. More than 2 million women who had held jobs during the wars were fired, and their positions were given to male veterans (Barnett & Rivers, 1996). The view of the man as the family breadwinner became the ideal. During these years, only 12% of married women with children under the age of 6 were employed outside of their homes (Risman & Godwin, 2001).

THE SECOND WAVE OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Roughly spanning the years between 1960 and 1995, a second wave of women's movements surged across America. As in the first wave, both liberal and cultural ideologies coexisted in the second wave. Also as in the first wave, the second wave sprang from different sources, sought diverse goals, and used distinct rhetorical strategies.

Radical Feminism

The first form of feminism to emerge in this century was **radical feminism**, which grew out of New Left politics that protested the Vietnam War and fought for the civil rights of Blacks. Women participated side by side with men in New Left struggles but didn't have equality with them. They did the same work as their male peers and risked the same hazards of arrest and physical assault, but New Left men treated women as subordinates. Men dominated New Left leadership, whereas women activists were expected to make coffee, type news releases and memos, do the menial work of organizing, and be ever available for the men's sexual recreation. Women were generally not allowed to represent the movement in public—their voices were not recognized or respected.

In 1964, women in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) challenged the sexism in the New Left, but most male members were unresponsive. Stokely Carmichael, a major leader for civil rights, responded to women's demands for equality by telling them that "the position of women in SNCC is prone." (He actually meant *supine*—on their backs.) In 1965, women in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) also found no receptivity to their demands for equality (O'Kelly & Carney, 1986). Outraged by men's disregard for their rights and men's refusal to extend to women the democratic, egalitarian principles they preached, many women withdrew from the New Left and formed their own organizations. These radical feminists' most basic principle was that oppression of women is the fundamental form of oppression on which all others are modeled (Dow, 2000; Du Plessis & Snitow, 1999; Willis, 1992).

Anna

I remember when the second wave of feminism started. I was in college then. I'd never thought about women being oppressed. I'd never questioned women's place in society. Two of my close friends and I were protesting for civil rights. The men in our group always asked us to go get coffee or food or whatever. We started talking about that—why was it that we were supposed to wait on them? If all of us were working to end discrimination based on race, why were they practicing discrimination based on sex? That was when I first became aware of sexism and when I became a feminist.

The crux of radical feminism was the confronting of women's oppression with revolutionary analysis, politics, and demands for changes in women's place in society and relationships between women and men (Barry, 1998a). In 1968 these women held their first national meetings, where they began to chart the principles and practices that would define radical feminism. Central to what they created were new forms of communication that reflected their politics. A primary radical feminist communication technique was the "rap" group or consciousness-raising group, in which women gathered to talk informally about personal experiences with sexism. Radical feminists' commitment to equality and their deep suspicion of hierarchy led them to adopt communication practices that ensured equal participation by all members of rap groups. For instance, some groups used a system of chips in which each woman was given an equal number of chips at the outset of a rap session. Each time she spoke, she tossed one of her chips into the center of the group. When she had used all of her chips, she could not contribute further, and other, less outspoken women had opportunities to speak. This technique was valuable because it recognized the importance of women's voices, encouraged individual women to find and use their voices, and taught women to listen to and respect each other.

Consciousness-raising groups were leaderless, as were working committees in radical feminist organizations. Reflecting disillusion with the vying for power that

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The Famous Bra Burning (That Didn't Happen!)

One of the most widespread misperceptions is that feminists burned bras in 1968 to protest the Miss America pageant. That never happened. Here's what did.

In planning a response to the pageant, protesters considered a number of strategies to dramatize their disapproval of what the pageant stood for and how it portrayed women. They decided to protest by throwing false eyelashes, bras, and girdles into what they called the Freedom Trash Can. They also put a crown on an animal labeled Miss America and led it around the pageant. In early planning for the protest, some members suggested burning bras, but this idea was abandoned (Hanisch, 1970; Oakley, 2002). However, a reporter heard of the plan and reported it as fact on national media. Millions of Americans accepted the report as accurate, and even today many people refer to feminists as "bra-burners."

characterized organizations like SDS and SNCC, leaderless discussions were structured so that participants had equal power. A third innovative communication form of radical feminists was guerrilla theater, in which they engaged in public communication to dramatize issues and arguments. Protests against the Miss America pageants in 1968 and 1969, for instance, included throwing cosmetics and constrictive underwear for women into trash containers to demonstrate rejection of the view of women as sex objects.

Perhaps the most important outcome of this movement was identifying the structural basis of women's oppression. The connection between social practices and individual women's situations was captured in radical feminists' declaration that "the personal is political." Through consciousness raising and collective efforts, radical feminists launched a women's health movement that helped women recognize and resist doctors' sexist and dictatorial attitudes and become knowledgeable about their own bodies (Boston Women's Health Club Book Collective, 1976; The Diagram Group, 1977). Although radical feminists' refusal to formally organize limited their ability to affect public policies and structures, they offered—and continue to offer—a profound and far-reaching critique of sexual inequality.

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The Guerrilla Girls

Radical feminists are not confined to history. Some radical feminists continue to boldly challenge sexism, racism, and other kinds of discrimination. One radical feminist group is the Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous organization that campaigns against sexism, racism, and elitism in the art world (Guerrilla Girls, 1995).

They first captured public attention in the 1980s when they protested the Museum of Modern Art's exhibit entitled "International Survey of Contemporary Art." The Guerrilla Girls plastered posters throughout public places in New York City. The posters featured one nude woman from the Met's exhibit, but her head was covered by a guerrilla mask. Armed with equal measures of information, sarcasm, and humor, the posters asked, "Do women have to be naked to get into the Metropolitan Museum?" Following the question were statistics on the number of women artists (5) and women nudes (85) in the museum's exhibit (Kollwitz & Kahlo, 2003). The press appreciated the media-savvy tactics of the Guerrilla Girls and gave them good coverage. The Guerrilla Girls remain anonymous, insisting that their identities are irrelevant and that they want to focus on the issues, not on themselves. This mystery, of course, enhances public interest in the Guerrilla Girls, who appear on talk shows and give public lectures—all done while wearing masks to preserve anonymity.

The Guerrilla Girls continue their work to serve, in their words, as "the conscience of the art world." Visit their Web site at: **http://www.guerrillagirls.com.**

Liberal Feminism

A second major form of second-wave feminism is *liberal feminism,* which advocates for women's equality in the world outside of the home, especially the workplace.

Today in the United States, 70% of women participate in the paid labor force (Ehrenreich, 1999), and they make up 60% of that work force (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1998). The high number of women in the U.S. work force stems from two distinct factors. First, the model of a one-earner household was never feasible for many working-class families (Stacey, 1990). Second, many women work because they enjoy the stimulation, status, and sense of achievement that comes with paid employment. It was this second factor that fueled the second wave of liberal feminism.

In the mid-1900s many middle-class White women were economically comfortable, but they didn't feel entirely fulfilled by their domestic roles. Surrounded by children and hardworking husbands, with matching appliances in their three-bedroom, suburban ranch houses and station wagons in the driveways, society told these women they were living the American Dream. But many of these middle-class homemakers were not happy. They loved their families and homes, but they also wanted an identity beyond the home. So they were not only unhappy, but they felt guilty that they were not satisfied with the American Dream. Because most of these women felt guilty about their dissatisfaction, they kept their feelings to themselves. Consequently, most individual women didn't realize that many other women also felt unfulfilled.

The liberal feminist movement crystallized in 1963 with publication of Betty Friedan's landmark book, *The Feminine Mystique.* The book's title was Friedan's way of naming what she called "the problem that has no name," by which she meant the vague, chronic discontent that many middle-class American women felt. Friedan named the problem and defined it as a political issue, not a personal one. She pointed out that the reasons women were not able to pursue personal development were political: American institutions, especially laws, kept many women confined to domestic roles with no opportunity for fulfillment in arenas outside of home life.

Acting according to the liberal tenet that women and men are alike in important respects and are therefore entitled to equal rights and opportunities, the movement initiated by Friedan's book is embodied in NOW, the National Organization for Women, which works to secure political, professional, and educational equity for women. Founded in 1966, NOW is a public voice for equal rights for women. It has been effective in gaining passage of laws and policies that enlarge women's opportunities and protect their rights.

Liberal feminism identifies and challenges institutional practices, policies, and laws that exclude women from positions of influence in public and professional life (Brownmiller, 2000; Rosen, 2001). The rhetorical strategies of this movement

Who Was Betty Friedan?

Betty Friedan was a key figure in second-wave feminism (Hartman, 1998; Hennesee, 1999; Horowitz, 1998). Born Bettye Naomi Goldstein in Peoria, Illinois, in 1921, she engaged in nightly conversations about politics with her father while her beautiful, fashionable mother looked with disappointment at Bettye's physical appearance.

Bettye enrolled in Smith College, where she was the star student in the psychology department. After dropping the "e" from her name, Betty became the editor-in-chief of the Smith College newspaper, which she used as a platform for espousing her views on Smith's secret societies, pacifism, and international politics.

In 1942, Goldstein graduated with highest honors and began graduate studies at the University of California at Berkeley. In her first year she was offered the most prestigious graduate fellowship in the field of psychology. She declined the scholarship, left school, and moved to New York City, where she met and married Carl Friedan, a theatrical director. The marriage was not happy, and there were incidents of violence.

Friedan worked as a journalist until 1952, by which time she was pregnant with her second child and McCarthyism had eclipsed feminism and leftist politics. Compelled to live in the suburbs, she wrote for women's magazines. But Friedan was unhappy with her life in the suburbs. She questioned other Smith graduates and discovered that they too were discontented with having given up their careers for their families. These conversations led her to write *The Feminine Mystique*, in which she addressed "the problem that has no name," thus giving it a name and giving impetus to the second wave of feminism in the United States.

include lobbying, speaking at public forums, drafting legislation, and holding conventions where goals and strategies are developed. Liberal feminism appeals to people who believe that women and men should have equal opportunities to participate in cultural life.

Initially, liberal feminism focused almost exclusively on issues in the lives of women who were White, middle class, heterosexual, able bodied and young or middle aged (Hooyman, 1999). In response to criticism of this narrow focus, liberal feminism began to pay more attention to and devote more political effort to issues faced by women who are not White, middle class, heterosexual, able bodied and young. As a result, liberal feminism has become more inclusive of diverse women and the issues in their lives.

Yet liberal feminism has little to offer people who believe that women and men have different needs and abilities and should be treated differently. For those who believe the sexes are basically different, various forms of cultural feminism are more compelling.

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About NOW

The National Organization for Women was established on June 30, 1966, in Washington, D.C. at the Third National Conference on the Commission on the Status of Women. Among the 28 founders of NOW were Betty Friedan, its first president, and the Reverend Pauli Murray, an African American woman who was an Episcopal minister. Murray co-authored NOW's original mission statement, which begins with this sentence: "The purpose of NOW is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men." Among NOW's achievements:

- Passage of the 1963 Equal Pay Act
- Amendment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include sex, along with race, religion, and nationality, as an illegal basis for employment discrimination
- Modification of Executive Order 11246 to prohibit gender discrimination in employment by holders of federal contracts
- Support of federally financed child-care centers so women can work outside the home
- Identification of and publicity about sexism in children's books and programs so that parents and teachers can make informed choices about media for their children
- Influence on reforms in credit and banking practices that disadvantage women
- Enlargement of women's opportunities to participate in sports
- Support for women who seek elective and appointive public office

Visit the NOW Web site at **http://www.now.org.**

Separatism

Some women believe, as first-wave cultural feminists did, that women are fundamentally different from men in the value they place on life, equality, harmony, nurturance, and peace. Finding that these values gain little hearing in a patriarchal, capitalist society, some women form all-women communities in which feminine values can flourish without intrusion from men and the aggressive, individualistic, oppressive values associated with Western masculinity. **Separatists** strive for lifestyles and communities in which women live independently in mutual respect and harmony.

Separatists believe it is impossible or a poor use of their generative energies to attempt to reform America's patriarchal culture. Instead, they choose to separate from mainstream society and form communities that value women and strive to

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live in harmony with people, animals, and the earth. In adopting this course of action, separatists limit their potential to alter dominant social values. Because they do not assume a public voice to critique the values they find objectionable, they exercise little political influence. Yet their very existence defines an alternative vision of how we might live—one that speaks of harmony, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence of all life forms.

■ Lesbian Feminism

Arguing that only women who do not orient their lives around men can be truly free, **lesbian feminists** define themselves as woman identified. Although not all lesbians ally themselves with feminism, many do so because of a shared commitment to ending discrimination against women. Many lesbian feminists are also committed to political activism designed to improve the conditions of women's lives. They join groups ranging from mainstream to radical (Taylor & Rupp, 1998). Some people argue that lesbians should keep their sexual lives private, just as heterosexuals do. In response, lesbian feminists point out,"That's exactly the point: We don't think employers and others should be able to pry into our private lives and deny us jobs and housing because of the gender of our sweethearts" ("A New Court Decision," 1992).

For lesbian feminists, the primary goals are to live as woman-identified women and to make it possible for women in committed, enduring relationships to enjoy the same property, insurance, and legal rights granted to heterosexual spouses. The rhetoric of lesbian feminists has two characteristic forms. First, lesbian feminists use their voices to respond to social criticism of their sexual orientations. Second, some lesbian feminists adopt proactive rhetorical strategies to assert their value, rights, and integrity.

■ Revalorism

One outcome of many first- and second-wave women's movements is enlarged respect for music, literature, and art created by women whose creative, artistic work has been silenced or ignored for centuries (Aptheker, 1998).

Revalorists aim to increase society's appreciation of women and their contributions to society. Drawing on standpoint theory, which we discussed in Chapter 2, revalorists believe that women's traditional role as caregivers has led them to develop values that are more nurturing, supportive, cooperative, and life-giving than the values men learn

Regina

I don't see much to be gained by having equal rights to participate in institutions that are themselves all wrong. I don't believe dog-eat-dog ethics are right. I don't want to be part of a system where I can advance only if I slit somebody else's throat or step on him or her. I don't want to prostitute myself for bits of power in a business. I would rather work for different ways of living, ones that are more cooperative like win-win strategies. Maybe that means I'm a dreamer, but I just can't motivate myself to work at gaining status in a system that I don't respect.

through participation in the public sphere. Sara Ruddick (1989), for instance, claims that the process of mothering young children cultivates "maternal thinking," which is marked by attentiveness to others and commitment to others' health, happiness, and development. Karlyn Khors Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her* (1989a, 1989b) document women's rhetorical accomplishments that have been excluded from conventional histories of America. Another example, from a different field, is physicist Evelyn Fox Keller's (1983, 1985) efforts to make known Barbara McClintock's brilliant work in genetics, which most science textbooks disregard. In documenting women's contributions, revalorists aim to render a more complete history of America and the people who compose it.

Some revalorists also celebrate women's traditional activities. Carol Gilligan (1982), for instance, highlights women's commitment to caring. Mary Belenky and her colleagues (1986) identify ways of knowing that may be more characteristic of women than men. The broad goal of revalorists is to increase the value that society accords to women and the skills, activities, and philosophies derived from women's traditional roles.

Revalorist rhetoric is consistent with the goal of heightened public awareness of and respect for women and their contributions to society. First, revalorists often use unusual language to call attention to what they are doing. For instance, they talk about *re-covering,* not recovering, women's history, to indicate that they want to go beyond patriarchal perspectives on history. Second, revalorists affirm the integrity of women and their contributions by supporting exhibitions of women's traditional arts such as weaving and quilting and public festivals that highlight women's creative expression. Perhaps the best-known example of this is the Lilith Fair, an annual music festival. Third, revalorists enter into debates in an effort to secure unique legal rights for women; for instance, they argue that laws must recognize that only women bear children and thus have special needs that must be legally protected.

Some feminist scholars are concerned that celebrating women's traditional activities and roles may have repressive potential, because it seems to value what historically has resulted in oppression (Boling, 1991; Wood, 1994b). For instance, caring for others may reflect skills women developed to please those who controlled their lives—sometimes literally. Revalorists respond to this criticism by arguing that *not* to celebrate women's traditional activities is to participate in widespread cultural devaluations that have long shaped perceptions of women. This controversy is part of the ongoing cultural conversation about the meaning and value of femininity.

Ecofeminism

Sharing some of the ideology of revalorists but also charting new ground are the ecofeminists. Ecofeminism's official inception is usually dated to 1974, when Françoise d'Eaubonne published *La Feminisme ou la Mort,* which translates to mean *Feminism or Death.* This book provided the philosophical foundation for **ecofeminism.**

Ecofeminism has been developed by U.S. feminist thinkers such as Rosemary Radford Reuther and influential French feminists, including Françoise d'Eaubonne, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous. Feminists on both continents highlight the connection between efforts to control and subordinate women and the quest to dominate nature (perhaps not coincidentally called "Mother Earth"). Rosemary Radford Reuther (1974, 1983, 2001), a Christian and theological scholar, argues that the lust to dominate has brought the world to the brink of a moral and ecological crisis in which there can be no winners and all will be destroyed.

Ecofeminism unites the intellectual and political strength of feminist thought with ecology's concerns about our living planet. According to Judith Plant, a fortuitously named early proponent of ecofeminism (Sales, 1987, p. 302),

> *[This movement] gives women and men common ground. . . . The social system isn't good for either—or both—of us. Yet we are the social system. We need some common ground . . . to enable us to recognize and affect the deep structure of our relations with each other and with our environment.*

Sandy

Before taking this course, I had never heard the word *ecofeminist,* but it pretty much fits me. I was raised on a farm, where I spent a lot of time feeding and playing with the farm animals. I was 7 years old when I saw a hog slaughtered. I became vegetarian on the spot. I didn't want to be part of that kind of suffering. Growing up on a farm also made me sensitive to land—if you take care of the soil, it will take care of you. I believe women and men are equal, but I didn't identify with feminism—at least not the feminism I learned about in school. It was too argumentative, too confrontational for me. But ecofeminism is different. It's about living in harmony with others and the natural world. That fits me and my values.

Ecofeminists believe that domination and oppression are wrong and destructive of all forms of life, including the planet. Reuther (1975), for instance, claims that "the project of human life must cease to be seen as one of 'domination of nature,' or exploitation. . . . We have to find a new language of ecological responsiveness, a reciprocity between consciousness and the world system in which we live" (p. 83).

For ecofeminists, oppression itself, not particular instances of oppression, is the primary issue. They believe that, as long as oppression is culturally valued, it will be imposed on anyone and anything that cannot or does not resist. Thus, women's oppression is best understood as a specific example of an overarching cultural ideology that idolizes oppression in general. Many individuals who stood against specific types of oppression have redefined themselves as ecofeminists (Chase, 1991). For instance, many animal rights activists, vegetarians, and peace activists have joined the ecofeminist movement. In fact, prominent first-wave feminists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Susan B. Anthony, and Mary Wollstonecraft thought that vegetarianism and animal rights were integral to a feminist agenda (Oakley, 2002).

The goals of this movement flow directly from its critique of cultural values. Ecofeminists seek to bring themselves and others to a new consciousness of

FYI

Feminism Is for Everybody

Whether or not you agree, that's the title of a recent book by bell hooks. In *Feminism Is for Everybody*, hooks (2002a) says it's a mistake to think feminism is just about women or women's rights. She sees it as a movement about mutuality and communion and sharing. For her, feminism is about justice, which she thinks is achieved by ending all kinds of domination and oppression, including but not limited to sexism and racism. For her, all forms of oppression are linked. hooks thinks that only when nobody is oppressed will it be possible for us to form truly authentic, loving bonds of mutuality.

To learn more about ecofeminism, visit Eve Online at **http://eve.enviroweb.org**, or visit the home page of the ecofeminist organization at **http://www.ecofem.org/ecofeminism.**

humans' interdependence with all other life forms. To do so, they speak out against values that encourage exploitation, domination, and aggression and show how these oppress women, men, children, animals, plants, and the planet itself. Ecofeminists argue that the values most esteemed by patriarchal culture are the ones that will destroy us (Diamond & Orenstein, 1990; Gaard & Murphy, 1999; Mellor, 1998; Warren, 2000).

Womanism

Another group of second-wave activists identifies themselves as **womanists** to differentiate themselves from White feminists. Criticizing mainstream feminists for focusing almost exclusively on White, middle-class women and their issues, some African American women see womanism as addressing both their racial and gender identities (Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Radford-Hill, 2000). Their goals are to make others aware of the exclusionary nature of feminism as it has been articulated by middle-class White women and to educate others about the ways in which gender and racial oppression intersect in the lives of women of color.

Womanists assert that second-wave liberal feminism represents only the experiences, concerns, and circumstances of members of the privileged race in America. bell hooks (1990) notes that African American women's oppression cannot be addressed by a feminist agenda that is ignorant of how racism and sexism come together in the lives of Black women. Because of their commitment to racial unity, some Black women are reluctant to criticize sexism in Black men (Collins, 1996).

Black women in America have a distinctive cultural history that is seldom recognized, much less addressed, by the White middle-class women who have dominated both waves of American women's movements. In neglecting the experiences of non-White, non-middle-class women, mainstream feminists may inadvertently participate in the very kind of oppression they claim to oppose (Rothenberg, Schafhausen, & Schneider, 2000). Some race-related differences in women's lives are that Black women as a group are more often single, have less formal education, bear more children, are paid less, and assume more financial responsibility for supporting families. Many Black women don't identify with feminist agendas that ignore their experiences (Findlen, 1995; Logwood, 1997; Morgan, 2003; Winbush, 2000).

Beginning in the 1970s, a number of African American women who were disenchanted with White middle-class feminism but who were committed to women's equality began organizing their own groups (B. Smith, 1998). Feminist organizations such as Black Women Organized for Action and the National Black Feminist Organization sprang up and quickly attracted members. In addition to focusing on race, these organizations cut across class lines to include working-class women and to address issues of lower-class African American women. Their goals include reforming social services to respond more humanely to poor women and increasing training and job opportunities so that women of color can improve the material conditions of their lives. Womanists' rhetorical strategies include consciousness-raising and support among women of color, lobbying decision makers for reforms in laws, and community organizing to build grassroots leadership of, by, and for women of color.

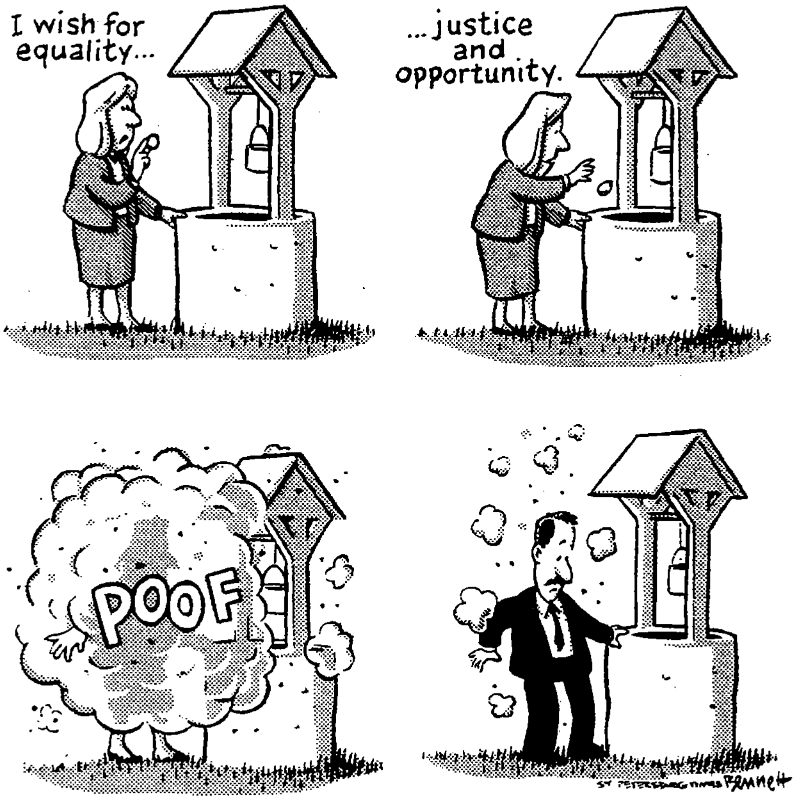
Lashenna

NOW's answer to African American women is just a trickle-down theory. Whatever big gains and changes NOW makes in the lives of middle-class White women are supposed to trickle down to us so we get a little something too. Well, thanks, but no thanks, I say. NOW and all those White feminist movements ignore the issues in Black women's lives. We have to deal not only with gender, but with race as well. Unlike a majority of White women, many African American women are faced with economic disadvantages, single parenthood, factory or housekeeping jobs, and little education. I have family members who face one or more of these problems. I don't want White women's trickle-down theory. I want a bottom-up theory!

In 1997, African American women organized a march to celebrate and nourish community among African American women. Following the second Million Man

To Be Womanish, to Be a Womanist

Alice Walker is credited with coining the term *womanism* as a label for Black women who believe in women's value, rights, and opportunities. According to Walker, Southern Black women often said to their daughters, "You acting womanish," which meant the daughters were being bold, courageous, and willful. To be womanish is to demand to know more than others say is good for you—to stretch beyond what is prescribed for a woman or girl (Collins, 1998). In her 1983 book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker writes, "Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender" (p. xii).


I wish for equality...
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March, which we'll discuss in the next chapter, the **Million Woman March** was held in Philadelphia on October 24 and 25, 1997. Powered by grassroots volunteers who built support in their localities, the steering committee for the Million Woman March was made up not of celebrities but of average women who worked at unglamorous jobs and lived outside the spotlight. The march de-emphasized media hype in favor of woman-to-woman sharing of experiences, hopes, and support. Perhaps the spirit of the Million Woman March is best summed up by Irma Jones, a 74-year-old woman who had marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., from Selma to Montgomery. After the Million Woman March, Jones said, "I'm glad we did this before I died. People say black women can never get together. Today, we got together, sister" (Logwood, 1998, p. 19).

Multiracial Feminism

Building on womanism's critique of exclusions in mainstream feminism, **multiracial feminism** emphasizes multiple systems of domination that affect the lives of women and men (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Collins, 1990, 1998; Hurtado, 2001; Morgana & Anzaldúa, 1983; Ryan, 2004). Leaders of this movement prefer the term *multiracial* to *multicultural* because they believe that race is a particularly potent power system that shapes people's identities and opportunities (Zinn & Dill, 1996).

At the same time, multiracial feminists insist that race cannot be viewed in isolation. Although especially important from their perspective, race intersects other systems of domination in ways that affect what race means. For instance, an Asian American will experience his or her race differently, depending on whether he or she is unemployed or a member of the professional class, the working class, or the middle class.

Also central to the multiracial feminist movement is emphasis on women's agency. Despite the constraints imposed by systems of domination, women of color have often resisted their oppressions. Even when they operated within abhorrent systems of domination such as slavery, women of color found ways to care for themselves and their families and to contribute to their communities. In highlighting how women of color have resisted oppression, multiracial feminists highlight the strengths of women.

Multiracial feminists challenge categories that structure how we think about gendered identities. Multiracial feminists insist that gender does not have universal meaning—instead, what gender means and how it affects our lives varies as a result of economic class, sexual orientation, race, and so forth. Gloria Anzaldúa (1999), a Chicana feminist, resists being categorized only according to her sex or her race-ethnicity or her sexual orientation. She insists that, on its own, each category misrepresents her identity because her race-ethnicity affects the meaning of being a woman and a lesbian; her sex affects the meaning of her race-ethnicity and sexual orientation; and her sexual orientation affects the meaning of being a woman and a Chicana. Yen Le Espiritu (1997) makes the same argument about Asian American women and men, as does Minh-ha Trinh (1989) about Vietnamese women.

For multiracial feminists, the key to understanding anyone's identity lies in the *intersection* of multiple categories such as gender, race-ethnicity, sexual orientation, and economic class. This leads multiracial feminists to write and talk, not about women or men as broad groups, but about more precise and complex categories such as Black working-class lesbians and middle-class, heterosexual Chicanas. Articulating multiracial feminism's goals, Gloria Anzaldúa (2002) states that it must "incorporate additional underrepresented voices" (p. B11).

Multiracial feminists have contributed significantly to feminist theory and practice by challenging the idea of a "universal woman" and showing

Katie

I like the ideas of the multiracial feminists. I agree that race cuts across everything else. I'm middle class, but my life isn't the same as a White middle-class girl's, because I'm Asian American. It's like the issues in my life aren't just about my sex; they're also about my race. I can talk to Black or Hispanic girls, and we have a lot in common—more than I have in common with most White girls. You just can't get away from the issue of race unless you're White.

that many groups are disadvantaged by a "matrix of domination" (Zinn & Dill, 1996; Hurtado, 2001). This important insight compels us to recognize how intersections among multiple social locations, or standpoints, shape individual lives and structure society.

Power Feminism

The 1990s gave birth to a new movement called **power feminism.** Although this movement labels itself feminist, a number of feminists consider it antagonistic to the enduring concerns of feminism. Writing in 1993, Naomi Wolf argued that it is self-defeating to focus on social causes of inequities and harm that women suffer. As an alternative, Wolf advocates power feminism, which contends that society doesn't oppress women because women have the power to control what happens to them.

Wolf urges women to "stop thinking of themselves as victims" and to capitalize on the power inherent in their majority status ("What About This Backlash?" 1994). To add credibility to her views, Wolf links herself with the Reverend Jesse Jackson, a passionate champion of those who have had little power. Wolf quotes Jackson as having said, "You're not responsible for being down, you are responsible for standing up" ("What About This Backlash?" 1994, p. 15). Although Jesse Jackson and, before him, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., urged Blacks to resist oppression, neither claimed that racial oppression results from the passive acceptance of those who suffer it.

Power feminism is more closely linked to the ideas of Shelby Steele (1990), a conservative African American who claims that racial discrimination is no longer part of society but only a paranoid victim psychology in the heads of Blacks and other minorities. Following in Steele's footsteps, Wolf tells women that the only thing holding them back from equality is their own belief that they are victims.

Folana

The only people I know who talk the power feminist talk have never been raped and never been slapped in the face with discrimination. They think their success and safety is a result of their own efforts and that any woman or minority person who hasn't achieved what they have just didn't try. I'll bet a lot of them would drop the power feminist line if they got raped. That might make them see that women and minorities don't have as much power as people like Wolf and Roiphe. As for me, I don't think of myself as a victim, but I know I'm vulnerable just because I'm Black and a woman.

Katie Roiphe is another visible proponent of power feminism. In her 1993 book, *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus,* Roiphe denied that rape is widespread on campuses and in society. She argues that the term *rape* is being misused to describe normal sexual relations. Roiphe asserts that Take Back the Night marches, annual nonviolent protests that began in 1978 to speak out against rape, are self-defeating because "proclaiming victimhood" does not project strength. Roiphe ignores the fact that for many people Take Back the Night marches reflect and fuel activism, not victimhood.

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Power feminism ignores pervasive social factors that historically and currently aggrieve women as a group (Bowman, 1994; Franek, 1994; hooks, 1994; Wood, 1996a). As *New York Times* columnist Anna Quindlen (1994) points out, "No one should ever discount the reason so many women can so easily see themselves as victims. It is because, by any statistical measure, they so often are" (p. A23). It is naive to think that personal will alone can always prevent women from being targets of violence.

There is a big difference between identifying a moment in which one was a victim, on the one hand, and adopting the status of victim as an identity, on the other hand. Bryn Panee, a student of mine, clarified this distinction when she reported on her experiences as a rape crisis counselor: "Every turnaround case, where a woman is able to make the transformation from a helpless victim to an empowered survivor, could not have happened if she did not recognize she was a victim of a horrible crime" (1994, n.p.).

Power feminism may appeal to women like Naomi Wolf and Katie Roiphe, who are White, upper-class, successful, and well educated. It is less helpful to women who do not enjoy Wolf's privileges. Feminist theorist bell hooks ("What About This Backlash?" 1994) says power feminism is endorsed by "people who have access to power. Naomi presents herself as speaking for the masses, but she is speaking first and foremost for her own class interests" (p. 15). Perhaps that is why power feminism is embraced mainly by White, heterosexual, middle- and upper-class individuals who have little or no personal experience with devaluation, discrimination, and sexual violation.

■ The Third Wave of Women's Movements in the United States

The second wave of liberal feminism continues to be active today. At the same time, a third wave of feminism has emerged. Building on second-wave radical and liberal feminism and the insights of womanists and multicultural feminists, **third-wave feminism** includes women of different ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, classes, appearances, and sexual orientations. But third-wave feminism is not simply an extension of the goals, principles, and values of the second wave (Bailey, 1997; Ehrenreich, 1990; Fixmer, 2003; Fixmer & Wood, in press; Hernández & Rehman, 2002; Howry & Wood, 2001). The rising generation of feminists has a distinct agenda and a distinct way of pursuing it.

Natalie

I really appreciate what the '60s women's movement did to make my life better, but I can't identify with it. My life is different than my mother's and so are the issues that matter to me. Mom fought to get a job. I want a job that pays well and lets me advance. Mom worked really hard to find day care for her children. I want to have a marriage and a job that allows me not to have to rely on day care. Her generation fought to make it okay for women not to marry. My generation wants to figure out how to make marriages work better, more fairly. Different generations. Different issues.

Because this movement is new, its agenda and rhetorical strategies are less clear than those of other women's movements we've discussed. It's also unclear at this time whether the third wave will remain a single movement or break into different branches with their own ideologies and goals. At this early stage we can identify four features of this wave and a fifth feature that is embraced by some third-wave feminists.

Remaking Solidarity to Incorporate Differences Among Women

Rather than treating women as a homogeneous group, third-wave feminists recognize that women differ in many ways, including race, class, sexual orientation, body shape and size, and (dis)ability. Coming of age in an era sharply infused with awareness of differences, third wavers claim they have "a very different vantage point on the world than that of our foremothers. . . . We find ourselves seeking to create identities that accommodate ambiguity and our multiple positionalities" (Walker, 1995, p. xxxiii). The rising generation of feminists is figuring out how to speak about and for women as a group while simultaneously recognizing differences among women (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003; Fixmer, 2003).

Building Coalitions

A second defining feature of third-wave feminism is a commitment to building alliances with men and other groups that work against various kinds of oppression. The second wave focused primarily on the needs and rights of White women, which fueled some tensions between women and men, and between White, heterosexual women and other women. Third wavers want to get beyond the exclusiveness that characterized earlier feminist movements.

According to third-wave writers, struggling to understand and incorporate differences can lead to a deep appreciation of intersections between various forms of privilege and oppression, what Patricia Hill Collins (1986) has referred to as the "matrix of domination." In Mocha Jean Herrup's (1995) words, third-wave feminists need to "realize that to fight AIDS we must fight homophobia, and to fight homophobia we must fight racism, and so on. . . . oppression is interrelated" (p. 247).

Third-wave feminists are also committed to building positive connections with men as their friends, romantic partners, co-workers, brothers, and fathers. But, warn these women, "We can't do the work for men, and we won't try. Social change requires efforts from *both* sides. We want to meet men in the middle, not do all the adjusting ourselves" (3rd Wave, 1999). In their zine, *Bust,* and their book, *The Bust Guide to the New Girl Order* (1999), Debbie Stoller and Marcelle Karp observe that trying to balance work and family has been almost exclusively a concern of women. They argue that it should equally be a concern of men because women and men are in it together.

The 3rd WWWave

The 3rd WWWave Web site declares, "We are the women coming of age now. We are putting a new face on feminism, taking it beyond the women's movement that our mothers participated in, bringing it back to the lives of *real women* who juggle jobs, kids, money, and personal freedom in a frenzied world."

Visit the site at **http://www.io.com/~wwwave/**.

Integrating Theory Into Everyday Practices

Although appreciative of the achievements of earlier waves of feminism, third-wave feminists believe that women still don't have a"complete package of entitlement" (Griffin, 1996, p. 116). Third wavers insist that the reforms won by the second wave have not been woven into everyday life. According to Shani Jamila (2002), laws no longer permit race and gender to be used as automatic barriers, but women and minorities still experience injustices that are subtle and outside legal censure. Third wavers emphasize the rift between legality and reality, theory and practice, structural changes and everyday life. For them, a key goal is to incorporate the structural changes wrought by the second wave into material, concrete life and all of its moments.

The Political Is Personal

The politics of third wavers reflects the belief that the means of exerting power and privilege are no longer centered in institutions such as the law. Instead, argue third wavers, power is decisively dispersed—it is exercised and resisted in concrete, local situations, in particular moments. Inverting the second wave insight that "the personal is political," third wavers believe the political is personal. Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards (2000) declare that, for third-wave feminists, "our politics emerge from our everyday lives" (p. 18). In other words, personal actions are a key way to instigate change in both individual and collective lives (Fixmer & Wood, in press).

Theorizing their politics from the ground up, young feminists insist that their politics must be rooted in the personal, bodily resistance to oppressive ideologies. In a stunning essay that explicitly links social constructions of female beauty to eating disorders that jeopardize millions of women's health, Abra Fortune Chernik (1995) writes, "Gazing in the mirror at my emaciated body, I observed a woman held up by her culture as the physical ideal because she was starving, self-obsessed and powerless, a woman called beautiful because she threatened no one except herself" (p. 81). After recognizing the connection between cultural codes for femininity and her own body, Chernik responded in a way that was both personal and political: "Gaining weight and getting my head out of the toilet bowl was the most political act I have ever committed" (p. 81). Many self-identified third-wave feminists are committed to personal action, which they regard not as distinct from, but as deeply connected to, political change. Borrowing bell hooks' (2000b) term "door-to-door feminism," Lisa Bowleg (1995) uses her voice to "inform and educate," and she has "challenged my family and friends" (pp. 51–52). And Mocha Jean Herrup (1995) notes that, "social change is not just about the kind of political action brought about by group action. Politics is also interpersonal—about how we talk to each other and how we relate to one another" (pp. 249–250).

Celebrating Girl Culture

Departing notably from mainstream second-wave feminism, some, although not all, third-wave feminists embrace aspects of traditional "girl culture." In a conversation I had with Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, the authors of *ManifestA* (2000), they pointed out that the second wave of the movement disparaged pop culture, but the third wave seeks to engage it and shape it to suit women. Some third-wave feminists celebrate their femininity and sexuality. For instance, some third wavers say Madonna has shown that "the trappings of femininity could be used to make a sexual statement that was powerful, rather than passive" (Karp & Stoller, 1999, p. 45). The blending of serious issues and "girl culture" is one of the earmarks of several new magazines for girls and women. Alongside articles about glitter nail polish and cool clothes is serious advice about issues such as racism, eating disorders, and self-empowerment (Kuczynski, 2001). For some young feminists, it's possible—and fun—to be both fashionable and feminist (Waggonner & Hallstein, 2001).

Energetic, humorous, thoughtful, angry, sassy, hopeful, and passionate—the new feminists are committed to activist feminist work (Heywood, 1998; Heywood & Drake, 1997). As they voice their concerns and carry out their politics, they will remake feminism to resonate with the priorities of their generation.

SUMMARY

The "women's movement" is really a collage of many movements that span more than one and a half centuries and include a range of political and social ideologies. The different goals associated with women's movements are paralleled by diverse rhetorical strategies ranging from consciousness-raising to public lobbying and stump speaking. The issue of whether a person is a feminist is considerably more complicated than it first appears. Whether or not you define yourself as a feminist, you have some views of women's identities, rights, and nature. It may be that each of us needs to ask not just whether we are feminists but *which kind* of feminist we are.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How have your views of feminism changed as a result of reading this chapter?
2. Choose the PowerTrac search option in your InfoTrac College Edition. Select title and type in "Seneca Falls Revisited." Then view the text of Lisa Marsh Ryerson's speech, "Seneca Falls Revisited: Reflections on the Legacy of the 1948 Women's Rights Convention." Pay particular attention to the excerpts from Elizabeth Cady Stanton's speech that appear in Ryerson's speech.
3. What do you see as the most important issues for feminism in the 21st century in the United States? What kinds of discrimination and oppression still limit women economically, personally, educationally, professionally, and politically?
4. To what extent do you think we should work to ensure that women have equal rights and opportunities within existing systems (liberal feminism) or should work to change the systems to incorporate traditionally feminine values and concerns (cultural feminism)?