

Feminism in Modern Society

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ABSTRACT

Women passed through many problems and obstacles to define her stand in society. In the past women were marginalized in all the spheres of society but by coming of feminism, the image and profile of women have changed completely. The present research focuses on the different waves of feminism and also deals with the different types of feminism.

1. Introduction

Feminism is the belief in social, economic and political equality of the sexes. Although largely originating in the west; feminism is manifested worldwide and is represented by various institutions committed to behalf of women's rights and interest.

2. What is Feminism

In feminism is for everybody: passionate politics, bell hooks(2000), Shares her "simple definition" of feminism.

"Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression." (p. viii)

- Feminism is a complex notion that has vast differences in meaning and connotation for people spanning generations, ethnic identities, sexual orientations, social classes, nationality and myriad identities.
- Feminism is not a static notion; rather it evolves with us throughout our lives and is shaped by the various lenses we use to view the world at large and, most importantly, our selves.

Feminist theory is founded on three main principles.(ropers, huilman, 2002)

1. Women have something valuable to contribute to every aspect of world.
2. As an oppressed group, women have been unable to achieve their potential, receive rewards, or gain full participation in society.
3. Feminist research should do more than critique, but should work toward social transformation.

3. Defining Feminism

Imagine you get a new job on the first day of work, you are getting a tour of the office building, and you notice something strange: only men work here! You wonder where the women are, and you ask your new boss. He looks surprise at the question and says, 'what are you, some kind of feminist?' If this happened to you, what would you think? Would you be offended by the implication that your are feminist? What exactly is feminism, anyway?

First, let's define feminism in general. The global idea of feminism refers to the belief that men and women deserve equality in every opportunities, treatment, respect and social

rights. In general, feminists are people who try to acknowledge social inequality based on gender and stop it from continuing.

4. The Three Waves of Feminism

- 'The history of feminism is often described in three temporal waves.
- This concept originated with the Irish activist Frances Power Cobbe in 1884 who shared that movements "resemble the tides of the ocean , where each wave obeys one more uniform impetus , and carries the waters onward and upward along the shore " (as cited in Hewitt , 2010 , p . 2).
- When viewing feminism through the metaphor of a wave , it is important to understand that this idea of uniform and monolithic waves is often reductive and ignores multiple and often simultaneous movements within and across race, ethnicity, nationality, class, etc . As such , it disregards bravery of women around the globe prior to the nineteenth century.

5. The First Wave

- The First Wave occurred during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- It involved some of the foremothers of liberal feminism such as Elizabeth Candy Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage who, in advocating for divorce laws to protect the rights of women, cited Iroquois laws that ensured a man provided for his family on pain of banishment.
- There was a strong influence of Native American women with whom white women shared land . The pioneers of the women's movement took cues from Native American ancestors such as the Iroquois system of election, whereby women chose their governmental representative from among eligible men.

6. The Second Wave

- The Second Wave occurred during the 1960's and 1990's.
- It unfolded in the context of the antiwar and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of marginalized groups around the world.

- The Second Wave differed from the First Wave in that it “drew in women of color and developing nations, seeking sisterhood and solidarity and claiming women’s struggle as class struggle” (Rampton, 2008, para 8)
- Some notable events during this period include the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the formation of the National Organization for Women, passage of Title IX in the Education Amendments of 1972, the Roe v. Wade decision, and the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Freidan.

7. The Third Wave

- The Third Wave is considered as the timeframe from 1990’s to present day.
- It is informed by postcolonial and postmodern thinking.
- Third Waves often mystifies earlier feminists as many have reclaimed lipstick, high heels, and cleavage. In addition, tattoos may adorn current day feminists.
- This Wave breaks constraining boundaries of gender, including what is deemed essentialist boundaries set by the earlier waves.
- Controversy and disagreement around identity politics between feminists in the third wave have escalated.

8. Major Types of Feminism

8.1 Radical Feminism

Radical feminists differ from liberal feminists in that they seek cultural transformation, not just equity (Calas & Smircich, 1996; Whelehan, 1995). In addition, separatism, not assimilation, is a hallmark of this paradigm (Black, 1989) and is what makes “radical” feminism radical. However, radical feminism is difficult to define and trace to a particular theoretical influence or influences because its epistemology is diverse. Created from the voices and experiences of different women (Jaggar, 1983; Whelehan, 1995). Furthermore, personal life is the focus, rather than social structures. Radical feminists coined the phrase “the personal is political” that many strands now endorse (Whelehan, 1995).

Radical feminism portrays alternate worlds outside of patriarchy. Through grassroots mobilization, radical feminists create “woman space,” separatist enclaves to raise awareness about the oppression of patriarchy. This “consciousness raising” is a fundamental strategy for this strand of feminists; for, without understanding, one lives with false consciousness and cannot adequately question the dominant oppressive culture.

Jaggar (1983) states that radical feminists want evolutionary change. Through consciousness raising and developing a women’s culture through art, literature, and music, radical feminists seek to undermine rather than to overthrow patriarchy (Jaggar, 1983; whelehan, 1995). In addition, oppression is focused on women as women, not as workers, directing change at institutions like marriage, sexuality, and love. These strategies and goals are rarely considered a part of the fabric of academe. Yet, radical feminism can influence academic activism.

8.2 Left Feminism

While maintaining the radical feminist mantra of the personal is political, left feminists describe dual sources of oppression. Not only does patriarchy oppress women but the capitalist labor economy also oppresses them (Shelton & Agger, 1903). Scholars label this strand of feminism as Marxist, social, socialist, or left (Black, 1989; Calas & Smircich, 1996; Jaggar, 1983; Shelton & Agger, 1993; Whelehan, 1995), although some make a slight distinction between Marxist and socialist feminism. For example, according to Calas and Smircich (1996) and Jaggar (1983), Marxist feminism focuses primarily on modes of production in the non-domestic economy. Socialist feminists, as described by these scholars, emphasize the domestic and external labor markets and include the influences of culture and politics. However, some scholars do not make such a distinction. Because of the somewhat inconsistent ways this strand of feminism is described, I have chosen to adopt Shelton & Agger’s moniker, left feminism. Left feminism, as I use it, is influenced by Marxism and the oppression of class struggle, but like Calas and Smircich’s and Jaggar’s theory of socialist feminism, it combines a multi-issue politics to explain that oppression is mutually influenced by capitalism, patriarchy, culture, and history. These feminists are critical of liberal feminists for lacking some understanding of the labor process (Calas & Smircich, 1996). Moreover, unlike radical feminists, left feminists encourage men to become involved in confronting the sources of oppression. Failure to include men will only continue to perpetuate patriarchy (Whelehan, 1995).

Inequality is based on gender and stops it from continuing. Feminists point out that in most cultures throughout history men have received more opportunities than women. While this basic idea of feminism seems simple enough, there are many people who misunderstand what the goal of feminism is some people imagine that all feminists are angry, bitter women who only want to subjugate men! Of course, this stereotype offends actual feminists. Why is there such a big difference between stereotype and reality when it comes to feminists? One of the reasons for this discrepancy might be because there are, in fact, lots of different, specific types of feminism. Let’s cover four of those types now - Radical feminism, socialist feminism, cultural feminism and liberal feminism. Maybe you are a feminist and you don’t even know it!

8.4 Cultural Feminism

The third type of feminism we will discuss in this lecture is cultural feminism. Cultural feminism is a movement that points out how modern society is hurt by encouraging masculine behavior, but society would benefit by encouraging feminine behavior instead.

8.5 Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism is slightly less extreme but still calls for major social change. Socialist feminism is a movement that calls for an end to capitalism through a socialist reformation of our economy. Basically, socialist feminism gives that capitalism strengthens and supports the sexist status quo because men are the ones who currently have power and money. Those men are more willing to share their power and money with other men, which means that women are

continually given fewer opportunities and resources. This keeps women under the control of men. In short, socialist feminism focuses on economics and politics. They might point out the fact that in united states women are typically paid only \$ 0.70 for the exact same job that a men would be paid a dollar for. Why are women paid less than men for the same work? Socialist feminists point out that this difference is based on a capitalist system.

8.6 Existential feminism

- Simone de Beauvoir(1952) developed another conceptualization of feminism – existentialist feminism.
- This type of feminism puts forth the knowingly controversial idea that prostitution empowers women both financially and within the general hierarchy of society. When compared to Marxist and socialist feminism, the contrast with this type of entrepreneurial spirit is distinct.
- Central to this perspective is the concept that one is not born a women but becomes a women. De Beauvoir emphasizes that women must transcend their natural position and choose economic, personal, and social freedom.

8.7 Multi Cultural feminism

Multi Cultural feminists suggest that in a nation like United states every women has different intersecting identities and therefore, is not alike with any other women.

This lens on feminism takes into account a number of different interconnected identities and influences; it is sometimes, utilized as an umbrella through which many various perspectives can be considered.

Notably, some argue that this is not a useful umbrella for myriad feminist perspective that are historically and culturally

distinct, as it collapses groups and divorces itself from a focus on a specific race, geographic region, and / or unifying language.

8.8 Eco feminism

Eco feminism is the recognition of the common ground in both feminism and environmentalism. This is natural pairing as eco feminists argue that there is a correlation between the destruction of the planet and exploitation of women worldwide by the patriarchy. This particular area of feminism intersects with issue of socio economic privilege speciesism and racism.

Eco feminists contend that both the destruction of the planet and its inhabitants are at stake, and the only way to avert these disasters is through taking a feminists perspective of the world.

9. Conceptualizations of Feminism

There are many different Conceptualizations, or variations of feminism. Though, not all inclusive by far, this presentation provides a basic introduction to some of these different perceptions of feminism.

Some of these perspectives are congruent with each other, some build off of each other, and some are in strict opposition to each other. We encourage you to read about these and additional feminist perspectives beyond this presentation.

10. Conclusion

The main conclusion drawn from this research is that the feminist efforts were efficient in many ways in which they brought a huge change in the position and the role of woman. They were able to remove the majority if not all the stereotypical pictures and to give her more importance in the society by giving her the political, social and economical rights.

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