On January 21, 2017, millions of people across the globe gathered to protest in the Women’s Marches; marches were held in over 400 locations in the United States and in more than 150 locations in 81 countries around the world. Wearing pink “pussy” hats and waving creative signs and banners, people gathered to voice their concern about a variety of issues—women’s rights, immigration reform, LGBTQIA+ rights, the environment, and more. Most of all, the protests were a rebuttal to Hillary Clinton’s defeat and Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 United States presidential election, particularly in the aftermath of Trump’s sexist comments about women.

The marches in 2017 and the protest movements that are still active today are a continuation of a long history of marches, protests, and political activism against the exclusion of women from the public realm and the subjugation of women in the private realm as well. While the patriarchal roots of modern culture and civilization are deep, as detailed in Chapter 1, concerted efforts to elevate the status of women really began to emerge in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, coinciding with the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution was a period of dramatic political, economic, and social upheaval as new technological developments, like the steam engine and the factory system, transformed society. While there is debate about whether this change was good for the status of women, questions about the role of women in society came to the fore. This chapter traces the history of activism for the advancement of women’s rights and efforts to transform the patriarchal roots of modern society, describing both the successes and failures of these efforts. After identifying key themes in this chapter, we start by examining women’s activism in the United States around the time of the Industrial Revolution and the emigration of the colonists from Europe to the colonies.

Several themes emerge in this examination, building on themes from the previous chapter. First, as described in Chapter 1, while women have historically been excluded from the public realm, the exclusion to and subjugation in the private realm are critical to their oppression. Historically though, efforts to give women fuller voice and extend to them the rights of citizenship in the public realm have generally been more successful than efforts to eliminate the roots of the patriarchy in the private realm. Such transformation challenges the social construction of reality for so many, which has made the achievement of true equality for women an
unfulfilled goal. Second, the success of efforts to advance the status of women have been hampered by the fact that those active in these movements were and are often divided by cross-cutting identities that prevented them from developing a sense of group consciousness. In particular, early waves of feminist organizing were marred by classism and racism. A deeper understanding of the intersectionality of oppression has only recently emerged, but divisions among those fighting for women's equality can impede progress. This is a theme we will revisit in Chapter 9. Finally, bringing these two themes together, feminist organizing has been more successful when there is a single overarching goal focused on eliminating barriers to women's equality in the public realm around which to organize. But as more voices have emerged and been given equal status and preliminary gains have been secured, a unifying focus has become more elusive. This is a vexing conundrum that faces the women’s movement to this day—how to advance the cause of women’s rights when there are so many flourishing and legitimate issues that motivate political activism.

COLONIAL HISTORY

While early settlers in the United States migrated predominantly from England in and around the time of the Industrial Revolution, bringing with them English common law tradition, the common law patriarchal view of the status of women in society was not the only one that existed in the colonial era. As seen in Chapter 1, alternative arrangements that elevated the status of women coexisted with the dominant patriarchal arrangements. Quaker tradition, for example, allowed women to act as public ministers, and because of this role in the church, they were also granted a role in secular society.1 Many Native American tribes maintained matrilineal kinship and residence systems, as described in Box 2.1.2 Women also played a central role in early colonial economies; in Boston and Philadelphia, women were nearly half of all licensed retailers in the mid to late 1700s.3 Given the centrality of women to colonial society and the economy, some colonies recognized the legal status of women, too, allowing them to enter into contracts, testify against their spouses, and seek a divorce.4

BOX 2.1: COMPARATIVE FEATURE

Sex and Gender Roles in Native American Culture

As noted in Chapter 1, regions that were remote and harder to reach sustained hunter-gatherer lifestyles for longer, and, thus, alternatives to patriarchal systems emerged. This is true around the globe, but it was also true of the United
States when the colonists first immigrated. After first coming to North America sometime around 4,000 BCE, the transition from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle was slow for Native Americans; furthermore, different tribes settled around different advantageous locations (some fished, and some cultivated crops, for example), such that there was a good deal of variation in the social arrangements of Native American communities. Contrary to discussions of the connections between agriculture and the patriarchy from Chapter 1, in Native American societies, “the more central hunting was to survival, the more extensive were men’s prerogatives; the greater the dependence upon cultivation, the greater the realms of authority and autonomy for women.” This pattern emerged because, unlike the type of labor intensive agriculture focused on producing a surplus that emerged in much of the rest of the world, the type of cultivation practiced in North America left women in charge, much in the way women of the Hazda in Tanzania are largely responsible for calories provided by gathering. Because women were responsible for cultivation and were more place bound, they became responsible for group maintenance in societies where this version of agriculture was important, so matrilocal and matrilineal systems emerged in some Native American societies.

Carol Berkin (1996) provides a detailed account of relations between men and women in precolonial Native American societies in her book First Generations: Women in Colonial America. She argues that what we know about Native American societies must be taken with a grain of salt, as much of the recorded history was written by white men colonists who were baffled by the cultural arrangements of many Native societies. Because systems of private property did not exist in many Native American tribes, the driving force behind the development of patriarchal systems was missing, and different patterns of work and sex-based relations emerged, which the colonists could not understand. For instance, colonists traditionally visited Native communities to do (Continued)
business during the summer because this was the only time the men were present; during other times, the men were off hunting. But because summer was farming and not hunting season, it appeared to the colonists that only Native women were industrious whereas the men were indulgent and lazy.

Importantly, because women were responsible for crop production, they also controlled the means of production for this work and the fruits of this labor. Berkin (1996) notes that women's control over this surplus gave them immense power; for example, Iroquois warriors could only go to war if the Iroquois women released surplus cornmeal to sustain this effort. In some cases, women wielded power directly as was the case of Wetamoo, queen of the Wampanoag tribe. In other cases, women wielded power behind the scenes, as was the case with the Iroquois women who nominated men tribal chiefs and could have them removed.

Despite the wide variety of sex-based relations in Native American tribes and the existence of systems that gave women much greater power than they enjoyed in the colonies, these arrangements had little impact on relations between men and women among the colonial settlers—in large part because the social reification of gender roles in the colonies made them blind to what they could have seen before them. (Continued)

By the time of the Revolutionary War, these alternative visions of the status of women gave way to a common understanding of the subordinate role of women in American society. As Langley and Fox (1994) argue,

Everything seems to have been arranged to effect the oppression of women: religious doctrines as interpreted and practiced, the legal tradition as revered and taught, the institutions of family and property as promoted and nurtured, the republican ideology as understood and preached, and even popular sentiments as fostered and used for governing.8

Critical to this crystallization of the status of women was Sir William Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England. In these Commentaries, Blackstone clearly lays out the idea of coverture as the way to understand women’s legal status in the United States. He writes,

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that husband; under whose wings, protection, and cover, she performs every thing. . . . For this reason, a man cannot grant any thing to his wife, or enter into any covenant with her: for the grant would be to suppose her separate existence.
It is difficult to underestimate the effect of this interpretation of the status of women under common law on the actual status of women in the United States. For nearly a century, *Commentaries* was a standard textbook for legal training in the United States and was commonly cited by those opposed to the efforts to improve the status of women.9

Unmarried women, “femmes soles,” enjoyed some degree of legal autonomy, as they could enter into contracts and accumulate personal property. Given the diminished social status that accompanied “spinsterhood,” most women chose to marry during this period, despite the loss of legal autonomy.10 The reality of many women, then, was that they never legally existed; they passed from complete legal control by their fathers to complete legal control by their husbands. According to the legal concept of coverture, women had no legal existence outside the authority of their husbands. They could not enter into contracts or own property; their husbands had rights to all their wages and any personal property that they brought into the marriage. Women could not appear in court as independent actors because under coverture, women did not have legal personhood. The diminishment of women’s autonomy was not just legal; coverture also denied women bodily autonomy. Men had the right to absolute control over their wives’ bodies. This, combined with women’s lack of legal autonomy, meant that the concepts of domestic violence or marital rape did not exist. Of course, for a large portion of American women, these distinctions were meaningless as the legality of slavery meant much of federal and state law disregarded their rights to autonomy, freedom, and personhood, regardless of their marital status. The net result was that few women had any autonomy—political, legal, financial, economic, or bodily—during this period.

This legal interpretation coincided with the Industrial Revolution, which meant that more men began to work outside the home for wages, leaving women behind in the home. A “cult of true womanhood” developed, which viewed the proper role of women as pure, pious, and domestic.11 Women’s economic role in colonial economies diminished as did the scope of their responsibilities and, indeed, existence.

Given this decline after contributing so much to the Revolutionary War effort in traditional roles such as nurses and cooks but also as soldiers (secretly) and spies, women in the 1700s agitated to improve the status of women. For instance, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Abigail Adams implored her husband to “remember the ladies” in the writing of the Constitution, or else the women would be determined to “foment a Rebellion” should they have no voice or representation.

Despite the fact that colonial women were not successful in improving the status of women, they laid the ground work for women activists who continued their quest to elevate the status of women through obtaining the right to vote. Murphy (2013) argues, “in the end, historical interpretations that defended domestic citizenship would triumph, but not before alternative historical views were registered that supported the possibility of broader citizenship for women.”12
THE FIRST WAVE

The question of the status of women in society in the United States simmered on low burn during the late 1700s and the early 1800s with bursts of activism and victories here and there. Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792; in this work, one of the earliest examples of feminist philosophy, Wollstonecraft lays out the argument that women's character and status were not the result of their nature, but the environment in which they were raised. She argued for equal education for men and women, so they could equally succeed academically and professionally. Because the Constitution allows states to determine who votes in elections, women were able to secure the right to vote in some places. In New Jersey, single women with property could vote for approximately two decades until a law passed in 1807 limited the franchise to free white men.

But it was as women took up activism around other issues that the question of their own political status came back to the fore in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—what was known as the First Wave of the feminist movement. For instance, Catharine Beecher led the first national women's campaign in an effort to prevent President Jackson's Cherokee Indian Removal Act. Women mill workers in Lawrence and Lowell, Massachusetts, engaged in industrial labor activism. Women also became involved in the temperance movement (a movement to outlaw alcohol in the United States) in organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, although such temperance activism can be seen as largely conforming to society's views of the primarily domestic role of women.13,14

Women's activism in the movement to abolish slavery was particularly important in launching the first wave of feminist activism in the United States. Women's involvement in the abolitionist movement allowed women to acquire “important skills in speaking, organizing and agitating for social change at the very same time that they encountered resistance to their participation.”15 Women active in these abolitionist organizations forged connections that they drew on in leading the suffrage movement. For instance, Lucretia Mott formed the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society with Black and white women colleagues, which became a focal point for the advancement of women's rights. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton gathered nearly 400,000 signatures and delivered them to Congress in support of the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, later turning these organizing skills toward efforts to promote women's suffrage.

Denial of leadership roles in these organizations pushed women to fight for their own political place. Angelina and Sarah Grimké were widely criticized for speaking to “promiscuous” (men and women) audiences in support of the abolition movement. Sarah Grimké defended their actions in her *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women* in which she asserted that “whatever is right for man to do, is right for woman.”
Importantly, Mott, Stanton, and other women traveled to London in 1840 to attend the World Anti-Slavery Convention. However, after considerable debate, the men delegates voted to deny seating to the women delegates, forcing them to sit behind a curtain in an observer’s gallery and remain silent. The experience moved Stanton to draft the Declaration of Sentiments, which was presented at the Seneca Falls Convention, organized by many of the same women who were denied their place in London.

The Seneca Falls Convention in July of 1848 was a critical moment in the first wave of the feminist movement. The issues raised in the Declaration seem to be a matter of fact these days—the right of women to vote, to acquire a good education, and to pursue meaningful work—but at the time these were revolutionary demands. From the Declaration, attendees to the convention laid out 11 resolutions to demand equal rights for women. The most controversial of these was the ninth, which demanded the right to vote for women; this was the only resolution that did not pass unanimously and would have foundered were it not for the impassioned speeches in favor by Stanton and famed abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass.

When the issue of voting rights came after the abolition of slavery, many men abolitionists told the women that it was the “Negro’s hour” in order to avoid tainting the question of suffrage for Black men with the question of suffrage of women. The passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, which prohibited the denial of the right to vote on the basis of race, in 1868 marked an important victory for the abolitionist movement. But it was a disappointment to Stanton, Anthony, Sojourner Truth, and many women activists who worked in the abolitionist movement as section two of this amendment introduced the word “male” into the U.S. Constitution for the first time, prohibiting states from denying any “male inhabitant” the right to vote. Due to their frustrations with the setting aside of women’s rights, Anthony and Stanton organized the American Equal Rights Association, which sought to advance the cause of voting rights for Black people and white women simultaneously.

Nonetheless, as time went on, there were certainly tensions between the abolitionist and women’s suffrage movements. On the one hand, many women’s rights advocates were not happy when it became clear that the push for suffrage after the Civil War might not include women. They felt the push to secure voting rights ought to encompass both women and Black men. On the other hand, many activists were displeased with the “racism, ethnocentrism, and class privilege” in the women’s suffrage movement. For instance, Frances Gage, who presided over the Women’s Convention in Akron, Ohio, recounts how many in the audience warned her to prevent Sojourner Truth (Box 2.2) from delivering her famous “Ain’t I a Woman” speech, lest the cause of suffrage be mixed with the abolition movement. As we will see in Chapter 9, these tensions continue.
WHY DON'T WOMEN RULE THE WORLD?

This racism is evident in a close reading of the Declaration of Sentiments, which elevated white women above immigrants and Black people, and cited issues that were relevant primarily to middle- and upper-class white women—reflective of the liberal feminism discussed in Chapter 1. This debate continues in feminist circles today and will be one we revisit in future chapters. Ultimately, Terborg-Penn (1978) argues that while prominent leaders of the suffrage movement emerged from the abolitionist movement, their commitments to racial equality were the exception rather than the rule, such that discrimination against Black women in the suffrage movement was routine. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a preeminent suffragette, has been called a classic liberal racist who talked about fairness in the abstract while enunciating racist and bigoted views of African American men. She referred to them as “Sambos” and rapists in the time just after the Civil War.

Despite these differences, these activists managed to coalesce around the issue of women’s suffrage, even though this resolution was the most controversial at Seneca Falls. Some women felt that the expansion of suffrage was a matter of human equality. Others believed that allowing women the right to vote would have a civilizing effect on society. What “civilizing” meant differed amongst these women, though. Those in the temperance movement saw women’s suffrage as a means to restrict access to alcohol, for example, while others saw a white woman’s vote as a way to maintain racial hegemony. In addition to differences about rationale, these women were deeply divided on how to achieve this goal and what means they were willing to use to achieve it.

Even though the word “male” was inserted into the Constitution, Virginia and Francis Minor, leaders of the suffrage movement in Missouri, believed provisions that already existed in the Constitution provided for women’s suffrage—they just needed the courts to recognize women were citizens because of the Fourteenth amendment and therefore should be able to vote. So, Virginia attempted to register to vote in Missouri; when she was denied by the state, she sued.

BOX 2.2: SOJOURNER TRUTH

Truth, a former slave from New York who was active in the abolition movement, gave her speech extemporaneously. While there are varying accounts of the text of the speech, the most famous includes multiple repetitions of the phrase “Ain't I a Woman,” thus giving the speech its name. Her speech was a rebuke to the reasoning of men as to why women should be denied their rights—they were weak and intellectually inferior to men. As a former slave, Truth was well aware of the strength and intellectual fortitude of women and drew on her experiences working in the fields and bearing the indignities of slavery as forceful arguments for the granting of rights to women.

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In 1875, the United States Supreme Court effectively ruled out judicial means as a way to secure the right to vote for women in their *Minor v. Happersett* decision. In its ruling, the Supreme Court agreed that Minor was a citizen but that the Fourteenth Amendment did not give her the right to vote. The amendment had used the word “male,” and the Court articulated that voting was a state-level issue. By stating that “the United States has no voters in the States of its own creation,” the Court ensured that suffrage activists would then have to persuade state legislatures to vote on whether to give suffrage to women or seek an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The passage of the Fourteenth Amendment convinced the leaders of the suffrage movement of the need for an organization focused solely on the issue of women’s suffrage, so Stanton and Anthony launched the National Women’s Suffrage Association (NWSA) in early 1869. A few months later, Lucy Stone and others who opposed what they perceived as Stanton’s elitism, classism, and racism formed an alternative suffrage organization known as the American Women Suffrage Association (AWSA). As Buechler (1990) argues, the rivalry between these two organizations “was the logical, organizational expression of prior ideological, strategy, and personal differences within the women’s movement.”

The NWSA, led solely by women, was more radical and highlighted the connections between women’s oppression and the patriarchal structure of the family and work in society; as such, the NWSA focused on a variety of issues, in addition to suffrage. The AWSA, on the other hand, focused only on the issue of suffrage and included men among its leaders.

In addition to ideological and personal differences, the two main organizations differed with regard to strategy as well. The NWSA adopted a national strategy, focusing on securing an amendment to the national Constitution, while the AWSA pursued a strategy of amending state constitutions, believing that they could win smaller victories in favorable venues, which would make it easier to eventually secure voting rights for women nationally. There was a good foundation to this logic as western states were more amenable to the idea of women’s suffrage than the eastern states. Wyoming adopted women’s suffrage while still a territory, and when it looked like Congress might not approve statehood if women could vote, the legislature said, “we will remain out of the Union a hundred years rather than come in without the women.” According to Banaszak, “in every year between 1870 and 1890, 4.4 states considered legislation giving women the vote” through state constitutions. For example, Oregon introduced state legislation for woman suffrage in 1884, 1900, 1906, 1908, 1910 and 1912—at which point the state legislature voted for it.

Despite the fact that these two groups had different strategies, they both relied on similar tactics, focusing on educating the public about their cause through the press. These educational campaigns did not lead to many concrete victories, so in 1890, the two rival organizations merged to become the National American Women’s Suffrage Association (NAWSA). New leaders, such as Carrie Chapman Catt and Alice Paul, recognized the need to expand beyond educational strategies...
and build organizational and activist strategies. After leading the effort to secure the right to vote in Colorado, Catt stepped up to helm the NAWSA, which now focused on passing an amendment in Congress and then getting state legislatures to ratify the amendment.

Paul, along with Lucy Burns, was the leader of the more militant wing of the suffrage movement, the “Iron-Jawed Angels” of the National Woman’s Party (NWP). While much smaller than the NAWSA (just 50,000 members to the NAWSA’s two million members), the radical tactics of the NWP pushed the envelope and prodded the NAWSA into greater activity. They staged protests and pickets and marched in a suffrage parade before President Wilson’s inauguration. In 1917, some of these activists were arrested after picketing outside the White House; in jail, they went on a hunger strike and were brutally force fed. The pressure put on Wilson by these militant feminists was critical in eventually securing his support for women’s right to vote. These activists challenged conventional assumptions of appropriate behavior for women and, in doing so, challenged the status quo.

When President Wilson finally spoke before Congress in 1918, endorsing the right of women to vote, it was a pivotal moment for the First Wave. Nineteen states already had granted women suffrage, and Congress ultimately voted in favor of the Nineteenth Amendment, sending it to the states to be ratified as a part of the U.S. Constitution. Because ratification required the approval of the states, leaders of the NAWSA recognized it was critical to expand their support beyond western and eastern states, as such, racist and nativist sentiments came to the fore. The “Southern” strategy pursued by the NAWSA rested on the argument that allowing women to vote would provide for the continuation of white supremacy in the South. Suffrage organizations in the South routinely excluded Black people—both men and women—from their membership, and leaders actively excluded them from participating in events like conventions and marches.

Despite this overt hostility, many Black women actively campaigned for suffrage during this period, including but not limited to Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and Adella Hunt Logan, who made the intersectional argument that Black women, as victims of both racism and sexism, needed the right to vote even more. The movement still relied on support from Black people, particularly Black men who had recently been enfranchised (and not yet thoroughly disenfranchised by Jim Crow laws codifying segregation in the South). For instance, in order to put pressure on Tennessee to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, Alice Paul appealed to the NAACP to have Black men contact their state legislators; the NAACP complied but not before pointing out Paul’s racist exclusion of Black women.

In the states, the movement faced stiff opposition from a variety of well-financed and well-funded groups. Business interests and the liquor industry, fearful that women would vote to restrict their economic interests through reforms like the prohibition of alcohol or child labor laws, campaigned against ratification in the states. But decades of work meant that there were existing women’s
organizations in every state who worked tirelessly to secure approval. The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in Tennessee by a one-vote margin in 1920, the 36th and final state necessary to the ratification campaign.

The First Wave of the feminist movement ultimately achieved success in reaching the goal that united the disparate factions who supported suffrage for a variety of reasons; primarily though, they did so by studiously avoiding most other issues, to ensure that divisions did not distract them from their key goal. Thus, the success of the First Wave of the feminist movement rested precisely on the fact that it avoided tackling other issues that contributed to the subordinate status of women in the domestic and work worlds. By focusing on the civic and public sphere, suffragists were able to unite people around the idea of public citizenship. So while suffrage was an important first step in securing greater equality for women, the First Wave of the feminist movement left much business unfinished.

THE SECOND WAVE

Pushing for the right to vote united women around a common cause and allowed them, for a time, to overlook important differences on other issues. The passage of the Nineteenth Amendment represented a victory for the women’s movement, but it also meant this centralizing focus disappeared. As such, the women’s movement splintered as leaders began to take up different causes. For example, Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League of Women Voters in 1920, which focused on nonpartisan efforts to educate women voters. Alice Paul and other leaders of the militant suffrage movement took up the cause of an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Their efforts were opposed by social justice feminists such as Jane Addams who were fearful of an ERA overturning laws that afforded women special protection, such as working conditions and wages, in the work realm.

But while this period did see the decline of women’s organizations focused primarily on women’s rights, many women were still active on behalf of issues that affected women. There was a robust group of working class and minority women fighting in mixed gender political, labor, and civil rights movements and organizations such as the United Auto Workers, the NAACP, the Communist Party, and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant and Employees Union to advance the social and economic status of women. For instance, in 1937, a group of young women workers locked themselves into the downtown Detroit Woolworth store for six nights, demanding better wages and a voice in decisions at work, which they ultimately earned.

During World War II, women mobilized into the work force in support of the war effort, taking on a variety of roles once reserved exclusively for men, who were off fighting the war (Box 2.3). Rosie the Riveter and her “We Can Do It” slogan symbolized the mindset of women during this period. Women felt they were making progress toward true equality, not just political equality.
BOX 2.3: WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE IN WORLD WAR II

With the enlistment of so many men into the armed services during WWII, there was a great need to replace them in the workforce. Importantly, women were desperately needed to fill industrial jobs to support the war effort, despite the fact that these jobs had been historically reserved for men. During the period from 1940 to 1944, the percentage of women in the workforce had increased by almost half, and 37% of all women over the age of 14 held paying jobs. While the employment of women increased in fields across the board, their employment gains in industrial work were substantial; for instance, there was a 112% increase in the number of women working in factories. Rosie the Riveter, a fictionalized version of a real factory worker, was part of a campaign to recruit women to work in the defense industries. Interestingly, the original poster wasn’t meant for public display and was forgotten for decades; in the 1980s, a copy in the National Archives was discovered, and it became a feminist icon. While there is some debate about the inspiration for Rosie the Riveter, the most credible claim was that of Naomi Parker Fraley, who worked in a machine shop in Alameda, California. She passed away in January of 2018, although her legacy, in the image of Rosie, endures.

Many women were vastly disappointed when American service men returned home from the war. Rather than keeping their place in the work world, women were asked to step back into a primarily domestic role once again. As Dicker (2008) argues, “domesticity was celebrated in the postwar years as it had been in the Victorian era.” To be sure, this transition was primarily the plight of the middle- and upper-class white women. For poor, working class, and minority women, work was a constant, and the option to return to the home, whether forced or by choice, was not available to them.
This transition, though, forged some degree of common cause between middle- and upper-class and poor, working, and minority women. While the latter had been focused on issues such as women’s wages, access to education, and access to good work throughout this time period, the abrupt withdrawal of meaningful work for the former formed the basis for the Second Wave of the feminist movement.

Perhaps nothing crystalized the feelings of this group of middle- and upper-class women more than the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. Friedan herself was educated at Smith College and worked as a journalist before marrying and staying home to raise her children, like most educated women of the period did. Friedan did some freelance writing during this period, however, and while researching a story about her fellow Smith alumnae, she found that many of them were as discontented with their lives and roles as she was. She called this the “problem that has no name.” Friedan argued that women, namely housewives, could no longer ignore their discontent and the voice inside that told them they wanted more than a house, a husband, and children—they wanted a place in society.

While Friedan’s book was narrow in scope, drawing on interviews with affluent and educated women and focusing on issues such as isolation in their home and lack of meaningful work, the book also resonated with working-class and minority women who felt similarly unhappy with their lot in life. To be sure, their discontent stemmed from different causes. While Friedan and others like her were unhappy about their ability to work outside the home, working women were unhappy about their second-class citizenship in the work world. Thus, *The Feminine Mystique* helped crystalize this sense of discontent and was an important catalyzing force for the Second Wave of the feminist movement. Buechler (1990) argues that a strong sense of collective identity is a prerequisite for a social movement to emerge; during this period, it was this sense of marginality as a result of secondary status in employment, education, and other institutions that provided that organizing focus. In Chapters 3 and 9, we explore further this idea of linked fate among women.

For instance, in 1963 when *The Feminine Mystique* was published, many women worked outside the home, but it was common for them to be fired if and when they got pregnant. A married woman could not open a credit card without her husband’s permission, even if she had a job of her own. There were little to no protections against sexual harassment or domestic violence. Job segregation was the norm; women had access to low-skilled, low-paying jobs, but ads for jobs that promised more money and better potential for advancement announced that women need not apply.

Clearly, Friedan had tapped into a growing source of discontent that was bubbling forward across the nation. For instance, in 1961, President Kennedy established the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. The commission was chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of former president Franklin Delano Roosevelt and a known champion of women’s causes. The makeup of the commission...
reflected tensions amongst those who were working on behalf of women. On one side, liberal feminists argued for the revision of laws to eliminate sex discrimination and to recognize the full legal equality of women. On the other side, labor activists were worried that such changes would nullify protective legislation. They saw these laws as protecting women and children from harsh working conditions with long, unregulated hours with low pay, although others believed they had the practice of limiting women’s economic mobility. Nonetheless, the Commission had some immediate impact. President Kennedy barred sex discrimination in federal employment in 1962 per the Commission’s request, and the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1963 after the Commission endorsed the idea in 1962.

Additionally, in 1964, the issue of discrimination against women was drawn into the debate about passage of the Civil Rights Act. While the initial wording of the act focused on employment discrimination based on race, a last-minute amendment was passed in the House of Representatives that would prohibit sex discrimination. Many felt that this addition was a poison pill; while some members of the House voted in favor of this amendment earnestly, others voted for it because they believed that the addition of the word “sex” would sway others against the measure, thus dooming passage of the Civil Rights Act in the Senate. But a group of feminist activists working to advance women’s rights saw this as an opportunity, so Pauli Murray, one of the leaders of this movement and a member of the Commission, drafted a memo to be sent to lawmakers and the White House. In this memo, Murray argued that the distinction between sex and race discrimination was a false dichotomy; instead, she drew parallels between the two and insisted they could not be separated.

Murray’s argument in the memo and in her other academic works was instrumental in recognizing the intersectionality of racism and sexism; she used the term “Jane Crow” to highlight the ways that sex and race discrimination overlap and reinforce the subordinate status of Black women. Murray saw herself as a man trapped in a woman’s body. Despite the mores of her time, Murray traveled the country dressed as a man, with her woman partner; as Orleck (2015) argues, “it is difficult to imagine the courage and bravado she had to summon to wander through the American Southwest in the mid-1930s, a cross-dressed, mixed-race woman traveling with her white female lover.” Importantly, Murray’s experiences as a queer, Black woman are perhaps what made her uniquely qualified to identify the intersectionality of varying forms of discrimination; while the term intersectionality did not emerge until later, Murray’s work was foundational to this concept. The Civil Rights Act ultimately passed both chambers of Congress and was signed into law, with protections against sex discrimination in employment included.

The Commission ultimately reported on its findings in October of 1963, although the assassination of President Kennedy a month later overshadowed its release. Nonetheless, it sold over 64,000 copies and spurred the creation of state commissions on the status of women across the nation. The report contained a variety of specific recommendations for change, such as increasing access to education, a basic income, and child care. However, the report largely conformed
to conventional expectations about the role of women; while it advocated for reforms to make women more equal, it also largely endorsed traditional gender roles and a liberal feminist approach to equality. Importantly, the report did not endorse the passage of an Equal Rights Amendment, largely on the guidance of Pauli Murray who believed it was not necessary because women’s equality could be advanced under the Fourteenth Amendment.

Even though the Civil Rights Act protected women, many felt that the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) was not doing enough to enforce these protections and did not take sex discrimination seriously. For instance, in 1966, the EEOC upheld the legality of sex-segregated help wanted ads, so these ads continued to separate postings for men’s jobs, like lawyers, engineers, and managers, from women’s jobs, like secretaries, teachers, and nurses. As described in Box 2.4, the pay gap, or the difference in earnings between men and women, had not budged since the passage of the Civil Rights Act; women still earned approximately $0.59 to every one dollar men earned in 1966. Buechler (1990) argues that this gap created a sense of rising expectations for equality with declining satisfaction, which is essential for protest movements, as it creates an intolerable gap between what people want and what they get, or relative deprivation. The EEOC’s lack of attention to sex discrimination certainly fostered this gap.

**BOX 2.4: POLICY FEATURE**

**The Pay Gap**

Equal pay for equal work has been one of the main motivating forces behind women’s political activism for generations, both in the United States and around the world. In 2017, in the United States, women still earn approximately $0.80 on the dollar as compared to white men, with larger disparities for Black ($0.68 on the dollar) and Hispanic ($0.62 cents on the dollar) women. Globally, women earn approximately $0.63 on the dollar as compared to men. According to research from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, if the pay gap continues to decrease at the same pace as it has in recent years, pay parity in the United States should be expected in 2059 for white women, 2124 for Black women, and 2233 for Hispanic women; the intersectional nature of the pay gap is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

The causes of the wage gap are diverse, but a few are important to highlight. A large part of the gap is caused by occupational segregation; even though women have access to more kinds of work than they did in the past, they still tend to be concentrated in lower paying fields. Low pay in these fields is due at least in part to the fact that society values women’s work less;

(Continued)
one study demonstrated that as women enter fields in greater number, the pay in that field declines. Fields that require similar education, experience, and duties can have vastly different median pay based on whether the field is dominated by women or not; for instance, janitors, who tend to be men, are paid 22% more than maids and housekeepers, who tend to be women.

Differences in pay can also be traced to differences in experience, as women are more likely to take time off work to assume caregiving responsibilities. As we discuss in Chapters 4 and 5, cultural norms place the expectation of child rearing and elder care largely on women, and the lack of domestic supports, such as paid family leave and affordable child care, makes it more likely that women in the United States take time out of work to shoulder these responsibilities. Internationally, the size of the wage gap varies from country to country, and research suggests this is due to differences in the strength of wage-setting mechanisms such as the minimum wage and collective bargaining by unions.

That said, every advanced industrial democracy has a wage gap between men and women. Research suggests this is a penalty for having children. After the first child, women’s wages drop with no concomitant drop for men who have children. Thus, some argue that what we often refer to as a gender penalty is more aptly referred to as a childbearing pay gap or a motherhood penalty.

Governments have pursued a variety of policy solutions to reduce the pay gap. For instance, Massachusetts passed a pay equity law in effect in 2018 that bars employers from asking job applicants about their previous salary until a job offer is made and from preventing employees from discussing their wages; it also prohibits retaliating against employees who exercise their rights under this act. The intent of the law was to prevent past wage disparities from carrying forward into new work and to give employees new tools for determining if wage discrimination exists. Other countries provide generous leave and child care for working parents; Denmark provides 52 weeks of paid leave to a family after the birth of a child, and child care is highly subsidized. While the United States only provides limited unpaid leave for some workers under the Family Medical Leave Act, states are beginning to provide paid leave to more workers. California, Washington, New Jersey, and Rhode Island have all recently passed laws to require paid family leave, and other states are considering adopting such provisions.

Yet, even in countries like Denmark, which provides extensive support for working parents, the pay gap persists. The pay of men and women in that country when they begin their careers is roughly equal, yet women’s pay collapses by 30% on average when they have children; women’s pay is still one fifth lower 10 years after the birth of a child as compared to before they had children. This continued gap is partially the result of cultural expectations about child rearing and work, passed down from parents to daughters, but not sons. Until cultural norms about child rearing are challenged, progress on eliminating the pay gap will likely remain slow.
Thus, in 1966, when a group of women convened in Washington, DC, for a meeting of the state commissions on the status of women, frustrations were high. Some of these women met outside of the official meeting in Betty Friedan’s hotel room to devise a plan to launch a new organization, focused exclusively on promoting women’s rights. They realized, just as the leaders of the First Wave of the feminist movement did, that they needed an organization to serve as the focal point of this movement. Working together, Murray and Friedan drafted a statement of purpose that was adopted in October 1966, founding the National Organization for Women (NOW). Friedan was named the first president of the nascent organization.

However, the issues that divided Paul and Addams in the immediate aftermath of the passage of suffrage continued to plague NOW and the women’s movement. On one side, liberal or equal rights feminists believed that the movement ought to focus on the elimination of legal barriers to the differential treatment of women; equality could be achieved by equal treatment under the law, with no special recognition or treatment for either sex. On the other side were social justice feminists who believed that women as a sex were disadvantaged, so women needed more than legal equality; the advancement of women’s rights depended also on racial and economic justice. In some cases, such as maternity leave, differential treatment was not only justified but needed. These divisions were evident at the second conference of NOW, where members adopted a Bill of Rights but were divided over whether to support planks supporting an ERA and reproductive rights. The majority of women in NOW came down on the side of liberal feminism; indeed, NOW’s 1966 manifesto explicitly stated a belief in the power of American law to ensure equality of opportunity for women.

But almost concurrently with the formation of NOW, whose leadership was dominated by upper- and middle-class elite women who believed in liberal feminism, younger and more radical women were also engaged in the struggle for women’s equality. For instance, young Black women were raising issues of sexist treatment in the civil rights movement. In December of 1965, the Students for a Democratic Society, a left-wing student group organized to protest the Vietnam War, racial discrimination, and capitalism, held their annual conference, and women there organized a women’s workshop, an exercise in feminist consciousness raising. Demands for women’s equality in other leftist movements emerged, too, such as at the National Conference for New Politics, where women drafted resolutions calling for things like equal pay, child care, and half the convention votes. They were ridiculed for their request, and one organizer told Jo Freeman and Shulamith Firestone, organizers of these women, that they “had more important things to do here than talk about women’s problems.”

Importantly, these more radical women focused not just on transforming institutional structures in the public realm but in the private realm as well. For them, “changes in consciousness mattered as least as much as changes in the law.” For instance, Carol Hanisch (1970) argued that what had previously been seen as personal problems, such as appearance, sex, child care, and the division of household...
labor, are actually political problems. This gave rise to the saying—*the personal is political.* For radical feminists, class, sex, race, age, and sexuality were interrelated; they raised questions about family, lesbianism, abortion, colonialism, and other issues.

These radical feminists drew on political theater to emphasize their points; for example, they protested the sexism of the Miss America contests by burning bras, girdles, and fake eyelashes in a freedom trash can, giving rise to the image of feminists as bra burners. Important works like Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* highlighted how women’s role in the home, and particularly child bearing, was fundamental to women’s oppression. Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* demonstrated how patriarchal family units were a political institution. Thus, like the First Wave, the Second Wave of feminism focused on advocating the advancement of women in the public realm. But unlike the First Wave, the Second Wave of feminism began to draw attention to how the private realm and patriarchal systems, systems that encompassed both the domestic and public spheres, were instrumental in women’s oppression.

In 1968, representatives from a variety of these groups met at the first Women’s Liberation Convention. While these women debated whether the primary focus of their activism should be around women’s rights, racial and economic justice, or antiwar protests, they agreed that they should focus on drawing more women into the movement through a process of consciousness-raising. Radical feminism saw women’s oppression as the first and oldest form of oppression to which other forms of oppression are related, and the way to get women to see their shared status was through these consciousness-raising groups. The Redstockings, a women’s liberation group, articulated the need for and the process by which consciousness raising would work in their 1969 manifesto. They argued,

> Because we have lived so intimately with our oppressors, in isolation from each other, we have been kept from seeing our personal suffering as political. This creates the illusion that a woman’s relationship with her man is a matter of interplay between two unique personalities, and can be worked out individually. In reality, every such relationship is a *class* relationship, and the conflicts between individual men and women are *political* conflicts that can only be solved collectively. . . . Our chief task at present is to develop female class consciousness through sharing experiences and publicly exposing the sexist foundation of all our institutions.

Thus, consciousness-raising groups sprung up around the country; in these meetings, women would share personal experiences about a given topic, such as marriage, work, or child care. The process of sharing personal experience was designed to demonstrate to women that the problems they felt were uniquely their own were, in fact, common. Hanisch (1970) saw these groups as an important part of the political action necessary to achieve women’s equality. But for others, the issues that radical women’s movement raised were ahead of the time and thus a distraction from the goal of obtaining legal equality for women.
Despite differences in approaches and focus, the movement for women's equality marched forward, making advances on several fronts. Both liberal and radical feminist groups organized protests and demonstrations. NOW organized pickets at EEOC offices in 1967, demanding an end to sex segregated help wanted ads. In 1970, radical feminists staged a sit-in in the offices of Ladies Home Journal, protesting how the magazine depicted women and their interests.

Importantly, these women secured significant victories through their work. In 1973, the Supreme Court struck down sex segregated job ads in *Pittsburgh Press vs. Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations*. In 1972, Congress passed Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Acts. It stated, “[n]o person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” This act has been instrumental in opening educational and athletic opportunities to women. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act was also passed in 1972; it gave the EEOC the ability to sue when it finds evidence of employment discrimination.

Perhaps the most important step taken in 1972 to advance women’s rights was the passage of the ERA by Congress. The ERA was taken up by Alice Paul and the National Women’s Party after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment; it was first introduced in Congress in 1923. Because Paul and the NWP took “equal rights” to mean ending special benefits for women, this was met with immediate opposition from other women’s and labor organizations; opposition from these groups, as well as conservatives, meant that the ERA, which was introduced in Congress for 20 years after this, was roundly defeated. However, with the passage of the Civil Rights Act, both the courts and the EEOC held that protective legislation was no longer permissible, removing left-leaning opposition to the passage of the ERA.

As such, much of the energy and focus of the mainstream Second Wave feminist movement began to coalesce around the passage of the ERA. Mansbridge (1990) argues that in this regard, the movement to pass the ERA was like the suffrage movement: feminists of widely differing intellectual priorities, personal styles, and collective needs pooled their energies for a short, intense period in order to produce the near national consensus required to pass a constitutional amendment. Entities such as the United Auto Workers and the Department of Labor, which had long opposed the ERA, voiced support. Seizing on the moment, feminists convinced Senator Birch Bayh to hold hearings on the ERA, and Representative Martha Griffiths (D-MI) collected signatures on a discharge petition to remove the ERA from the House Judiciary Committee where it had been stuck. There were still issues to be worked on with respect to the wording of the amendment; in particular, these debates focused on whether women could be drafted and whether an ERA would impact laws regarding family and marital support. While amendments to the ERA to deal with these issues were rejected, they were important harbingers of the debate over ratification that was to come. Finally, nearly 50 years after it was first introduced, Congress voted in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution in 1972.
After ratification, the next step in the amendment process is for three fourths of the states to ratify the amendment. Immediately following adoption by Congress, it looked like the ERA would attain this mark easily. Hawaii became the first state to ratify on the same day the ERA was passed by Congress; five more states (Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Nebraska, and New Hampshire) followed in the next two days. By early 1973, 30 states had ratified the amendment, often with little to no debate, which seemed to imply that the amendment would easily meet the 38-state benchmark by the 7-year ratification deadline imposed by Congress. But then, ratification efforts stalled as opposition to the amendment emerged. Ultimately, the 7-year window expired, with only 35 states having ratified the amendment. Congress extended the ratification deadline to 1982, but no other states ratified the amendment during this time period. While there have been attempts to revive the ratification process and fresh Equal Rights Amendments have been introduced annually in Congress, the odds for actually adding the ERA to the U.S. Constitution are long (Box 2.5).

Why did the ERA fail? A variety of explanations have been offered, but it is important to highlight a few here. Jane Mansbridge (1986), in her book *Why We Lost the ERA*, argues that because the ERA applied only to government action and not private entities, it would not have had the impact that both proponents and opponents claimed it would. This is what the American public wanted; while committed to equality in the abstract, they were not committed to real changes in gender roles. For instance, in 1977, 62% of Americans supported the notion that married women should not hold jobs if jobs were scarce and their husbands could

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**BOX 2.5: POLICY FEATURE**

**The Equal Rights Amendment**

While Congress has not extended the deadline for ratification of the ERA, efforts to ratify the amendment and to pass state versions of this amendment still persist. For instance, on March 22nd, 2017, Nevada became the 36th state to ratify the ERA, 45 years to the day after Congress passed it; Illinois became the 37th state to ratify the ERA in May of 2018. In some of the remaining states that have not yet ratified the amendment, state legislators have introduced bills to ratify; for instance, there have been several attempts to ratify the amendment in Arizona. If 38 states ratify the amendment, it would require Congressional action to extend the deadline for ratification. These bills have been introduced regularly in the U.S. Congress but have not yet been approved. The Equal Rights Amendment organization keeps a list of which states have ratified the amendment; check their website to see if yours has.
support them.⁵⁸ Had the argument been framed as a symbolic advancement for women, Mansbridge argues, proponents might have been successful. But because the ERA would have few immediate effects, those who worked for ratification were the most committed. And the most committed indeed supported changes that the American public did not want. For instance, many proponents contended that the ERA would require that women be drafted and serve in combat, just like men—a change that the broader public did not support. We discuss this difference between equity policies and role policies (like the draft) and how this influences public opinion in Chapter 3.

This tension played into the hands of the emerging opposition, led by Phyllis Schlafly. Schlafly founded Stop ERA, which was devoted to preventing ratification of the ERA. While there were certainly other opponents of the amendment, such as conservative business interests that financed the opposition, the fact that some women opposed the amendment gave them ammunition. Conservatives opposed to the ERA put forward a variety of arguments against it: it would lead to the drafting of women to serve in the military, it would require unisex bathrooms, and it would lead to abortion on demand. This women-led opposition had two key effects. First, pitting women on the right against women on the left meant that the ERA lost its aura of benefiting all women, and second, the result of this was that the ERA became controversial, and controversial amendments rarely pass.⁵⁹ Importantly, this opposition resonated with the emerging new right. While the new right and the women involved in this movement are not monolithic in their beliefs, Schlafly’s arguments—which focused on patriarchal family values and morals and which framed the ERA as an attack on homemakers and mothers— appealed to social conservatives who believe women are naturally subordinate to men.⁶⁰,⁶¹ The Supreme Court’s landmark Roe v. Wade decision in 1973 galvanized the opposition as some of their worst fears appeared to be coming true. Schlafly was at the forefront of this new movement, which was successful in rolling back some of the gains secured by the Second Wave and creating a hostile political environment for future feminist action.

Despite the failure of the ERA, the Second Wave of the feminist movement was extraordinarily successful in advancing the status of women, mainly in the political and economic realm. Starting in the late 1960s and into the early 1970s, landmark legislation and Supreme Court decisions advanced women’s access to reproductive freedom, work, and education. The effect of these victories is profound. For instance, in 1970, just prior to the passage of Title IX, women earned 10.6% of all doctoral degrees; by 2012 (the 40th anniversary of Title IX), that number had increased to 50.6%.⁶² Women, for the first time, could receive a prescription for birth control and had access to abortion. In addition, no longer could employers limit applications to jobs on the basis of sex. But while there were important legal victories in the public realm during this period, there was still much work to be done, both in the public and private realms, to advance women’s equality; furthermore, as we discuss in Chapter 8, some of these victories are currently under attack.
THE THIRD WAVE

It is fairly easy to mark the emergence of the First and Second Waves of the feminist movement. Organized around an important goal, the right to vote in the First Wave and the ERA in the Second Wave, activists were able to temporarily put aside their ideological and political differences. But these temporary alliances masked real differences in opinion about the sources of women’s oppression and the necessary solutions. Furthermore, while the First and Second Wave of the feminist movement did much to advance the status of women, both movements were marred by racism and classism. For instance, during the debate over the ERA, Representative Martha Griffiths (D-MI) argued that without protection against sex discrimination “white women will be last at the hiring gate,” and Representative Catherine Dean May (R-WA) argued these protections were necessary to prevent discrimination against white native-born American Christian women.63 As another example, women of color in the 1970s waged a campaign against forced sterilization campaigns run by various states as part of antipoverty programs; these forced sterilizations disproportionately affected women of color, yet NOW refused to endorse any legislation they felt might be used to restrict access to sterilization on demand.64

But the issues raised by the Second Wave, and the radical women’s movement in particular, simmered for many years. The sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, along with women’s newfound access to reproductive choice, moved discussion about sexuality out into the open. In some ways then, the consciousness raising of the Second Wave was successful, if incomplete. Issues that had seemed primarily private, such as domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment, burst out into the open as more and more women began to see these as public issues demanding public solutions. While prominent national women’s organizations declined in membership, women remained active in many other organizations that affected the lives of women. For instance, women played prominent roles in the 1970s movements representing the interests of Native Americans, farm workers, and the poor and working class.65

Thus, finding a beginning moment for the Third Wave of the women’s movement is difficult. During the 1970s and 1980s, women were active on behalf of a variety of issues and organizations—there was no centralizing focus. And women were often on both sides of the debate on many issues. For example, many feminists were deeply divided about the issue of pornography. On one side, antipornography feminists like Catharine MacKinnon (1991) and Andrea Dworkin argued that pornography violated women’s rights.66 MacKinnon and Dworkin helped write local municipal ordinances banning pornography based on their theories. On the other side, liberal feminists, as exemplified by Nadine Strossen’s work Defending Pornography (1995), argued that banning pornography was a violation of the First Amendment right to freedom of expression and that suppressing pornography would be used as a tool to also suppress women’s sexuality.67
But as more and more women gained access to higher education and as the issues raised during the Second Wave began to take root, many more perspectives of feminism came to the fore: Black and Latina feminism, postcolonial and multiracial feminism, queer theory, lesbian feminism and more, many of which were described in Chapter 1. Given the centrality of this blossoming of feminist thought to the Third Wave, it is worth reviewing and highlighting several of these different approaches that developed during this period.

While women of color have always been involved in and at the forefront of the advancement of the rights of women, the 1980s saw the emergence of many powerful feminist voices taking up the mantle of intersectionality from Pauli Murray. For instance, bell hooks (1984) argued that “much feminist theory emerges from privileged women who live at the center, whose perspectives on reality rarely include knowledge and awareness of the lives of women and men who live in the margin.”68 Because these women accepted capitalist values, hooks argues, they would never be able to achieve women’s economic liberation, an important goal for those who lead less comfortable lives. Novelist Alice Walker (1983) coined the term *womanist* to describe feminists of color, but also to put forth a more encompassing vision of feminism; many Black women activists did not identify with the term feminist, given the racism of earlier feminist movements.69 This new term was designed to be more universal, including and representing more voices, particularly those of Black feminists.

Transnational feminism critiqued the largely white, North American perspective in the modern feminist movement; Mohanty (1984) in *Under Western Eyes* argues that feminist thought has tended to portray non-Western women as monolithic victims, thus creating two groups: liberated and educated Western women and victimized Third World women.70 This leads Western feminists to engage in projects to save women in these regions, denying these women the agency to liberate themselves.71 But there are strong feminist movements in many non-Western countries; see Box 2.6 for an example of the feminist movement in India.

**BOX 2.6: COMPARATIVE FEATURE**

The Indian Feminist Movement

There is a good deal of overlap between the issues that feminists in non-Western countries like India and feminists in Western countries confront. At the most basic level, the feminist movement in India is focused on issues like access to the public sphere and the basic safety of women. For instance, in 2012, thousands of people took to the streets across India to protest the brutal gang rape
of a young woman on a public bus. Violence against women is not uncommon in India, but it is uncommon for perpetrators to be punished. Something about the Delhi bus rape sparked outrage, and it became “a landmark in the fight for women’s rights and feminism in India, leading to legislative changes and moving sex and gender to the center stage of political debates.”

Despite fairly severe restrictions on women’s access to public space, Indian women have been active on a whole host of issues, starting in the nineteenth century. Women in India have long paved the way not only on women’s issues but also on significant socioeconomic movements, such as the Chipko movement focusing on ecological balance, the anti-liquor movement in Andhra Pradesh, and the movement against khaps or honor killings. Making choices about one’s body and dress is just as important in India as it is in Western countries. Millennial women in India have challenged moral policing of women regarding “sexist curfew rules in student halls,” and conservative men who disapprove of Valentine’s Day and women’s presence in places like pubs. In terms of the latter, feminists waged the Pink Chaddi campaign against right-wing men who want to limit women in public places. “Chaddi is a childish word for underwear and slang for right-wing hardliner,” feminists sent pink underwear to a conservative right-wing leader as a joke but also as a way to emphasize that women have freedom in public to embrace a man, have consensual sex, or simply enjoy a run in the park. However, as in the United States, the feminist movement in India is challenged by the vast diversity of women in India, with divisions along class, caste, religion, sexuality, and disability lines, which we describe in more depth in Chapter 9. And just as in the West, one of the difficult tasks that Indian feminists face is changing underlying attitudes toward women, which activists see as necessary for an end to the violence, persecution, and abuse women in India experience.

The sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s also coincided with and led to the rise of sex-positive, lesbian, and queer feminism. **Sex-positive feminists** celebrated women’s sexuality and placed consent and empowerment at the center of the sexual experience. Thus, these feminists focused on constructing a personalized and individualized approach to women’s issues such as sex, pornography, and prostitution. While social conservatives saw feminists as man haters,
lesbian feminism emerged as a result of what they saw as the Second Wave's hostility toward lesbians; for instance, Betty Friedan, as president of NOW, used the phrase “lavender menace” to describe what she saw as the threat of lesbianism to the organization. Lesbian radical feminists claimed this phrase for their own and argued for the inclusion of lesbians and lesbian issues in the feminist movement. Queer theorists argued against the creation and use of binaries (such as male/female or straight/gay) and saw these as artificial constructs used to maintain the power of dominant groups. Contrary to many feminists who argued that sex was biological and gender socially constructed, queer theorists argue that both are socially constructed. Importantly, these feminists demonstrated that our notions of what is considered masculine and feminine are socially constructed and constantly changing. For instance, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, pink was a boys’ color, while blue was a girls’ color, and young boys, including future president Franklin Roosevelt, routinely wore dresses.

It is important to note that these diverse voices emerged in a culture that was growing increasingly hostile to contemporary feminism. Conservative women, who began to organize during the ERA campaign, were energized by three political developments that they believe threatened traditional values. In addition to the passage of ERA and the Roe v. Wade decision, these activists were alarmed by the growing LGBTQIA+ movement. Along with Schlafly, other women activists like Connie Marshner at the Heritage Foundation and Beverly LaHaye at Concerned Women for America, organized in defense of traditional values and families. The three women worked together to elect over 15% of the delegates to President Carter’s White House Conference on Families and staged protests at the event over what they saw as the antifamily agenda of the conference. Like the women’s movement on the left, the women’s movement on the right is not monolithic in its views. Laissez-faire conservative women, such as the Independent Women’s Forum, tend to be opposed to government intervention in the private realm and so are less driven to defend traditional families and values as compared to their socially conservative counterparts. Such women tend to be less prominent and visible in the New Right political movement, though, which is motivated by concerns about what the rise of feminism and women’s rights means for the traditional family structure characterized by marriage between a cisgender man and a cisgender woman, with the man serving as the head of the household.

Additionally, even those who were not directly opposed to the women’s rights movement were, at best, ambivalent about it and at worst, hostile to it. For instance, Elle magazine, in 1986, stated that “young women no longer need to examine the whys and hows of sexism. . . . All those ideals that were once held as absolute truths—sexual liberation, the women’s movement, true equality—have been debunked or debased.” The writings of Camille Paglia (1990) and Katie Roiphe (1994) encapsulate these “post-feminist” sentiments. Susan Faludi (1991) argues this rejection of feminism was a media-driven “backlash” against the threat that gains made by women represented to the status quo.
To be sure, the success of the Second Wave of the feminist movement led to education and economic advancement for women. Women had access to higher education and jobs that had previously been denied to them. Yet, despite the gains of the Second Wave, women were far from achieving equal status in society. The pay gap remained stubbornly intact, and the glass ceiling, a metaphorical barrier that prevents women from advancing into high-ranking positions, was immune to attempts to break it, leaving women outside of executive management and boardrooms. Furthermore, many women born in the 1970s were mothered by women active in the Second Wave; Rebecca Walker, Jennifer Baumgardner, and Amy Richards, prominent authors during this period writing about feminism, all had mothers who were active in the Second Wave. These women came of age during rising expectations for women; women believed they could “have it all.” But there was a wide gap between expectations and reality. Nonetheless, as these women were raised with different expectations, their approach to feminism was different. Rampton argues,

the Third Wave of feminism . . . was informed by post-colonial and post-modern thinking. In this phase, many constructs were destabilized, including the notions of “universal womanhood,” body, gender, sexuality, and heteronormativity . . . Its transversal politics means that differences such as those of ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, etc. are celebrated and recognized as dynamic, situational, and provisional.85

These women reclaimed many of the trappings of womanhood that their mothers had railed against: lipstick, high-heels, and push-up bras; they also reclaimed words such as girl, slut, and bitch. Riot grrrl activism that emerged during this time was a good example of this aesthetic. Emerging out of the Pacific Northwest, these activists expressed themselves through music in bands such as Bikini Kill, Sleater Kinney, and 7 Year Bitch and in zines like Jigsaw, Girl Germs, and Riot grrrl.

Yet, while the Third Wave of feminism was more successful in engaging with the issues of racism, classism, and heteronormativity than the earlier waves of the feminist movement, it was less successful in advancing a political agenda. Because there was no central organizing goal of this movement (indeed, Rampton argues that rejection of communal objectives is an important characteristic of the Third Wave), it
is difficult to say whether the Third Wave was successful; nor is it easy to say if and when the Third Wave ended. Thompson (2016) argues the Third Wave focused little on a political agenda but instead focused on breaking boundaries and conceptions of gender, which has sometimes caused disagreements among those involved as Box 2.7 explains.86

BOX 2.7: TRANS-EXCLUSIONARY RADICAL FEMINISM?

Even as feminism has become more inclusive, there are still debates about who belongs as well as claims of exclusionary behavior within the movement. Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminism, or TERF, is a collective idea rooted in exclusion of transgender people and particularly trans women from the feminist movement. Note, the way the term radical is used in this context is different from the definition of radical feminist theory provided in Chapter 1. In academic theory, the term radical refers to women who want to dismantle hierarchical institutional structures rather than gain access to them. Here, radical is used in a more conventional way, to imply that feminists who reject trans women embrace an extreme and unacceptable version of feminism. Kelsie Brynn Jones, a trans woman, writes on the effects of TERF in one of her articles. She cites the definitive emergence of TERF to be when Janice F. Raymond (1979) published The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male.87 Rather than grapple with gender dystopia—which is the clinical term for the distress a trans person feels when forced to present as the wrong gender—and the social construction of both sex and gender, Raymond argued that transsexual women reduced the female form to an artifact so that they could appropriate it for themselves. By minimizing transitioning to merely aesthetic choice, she denied trans women the status of women, suggesting that transsexuals' participation in women's spaces and culture amounted to a “she-male” invasion, metaphorically comparable to rape.

Aggressive disputes between some feminist activists and the trans community are not new. Goldberg (2017) dates the beginning of the dispute to the Second Wave feminist movement and the refusal of some Second Wave feminists to acknowledge transgender women as women.88 For example, the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, or MichFest, originally began in 1976 and promotes itself as “womyn-born womyn” only. Musical acts such as the Indigo Girls and Hunter Valentine boycotted the festival to advocate for trans inclusivity. Trans activists have seen the exclusion of women who were assigned male at birth to be trans-exclusionary, and some refer to women who argue for cis-women spaces as TERFS. (Continued)
Some gender-critical feminists (those who the trans community labels radical) argue that “gender is less an identity than a caste position. Anyone born a man retains male privilege in society; even if he chooses to live as a woman—and accept a correspondingly subordinate social position—the fact that he has a choice means that he can never understand what being a woman is really like.” They argue that sex and gender should not be seen as interchangeable. These gender critical feminists argue that “sex-based gender roles are oppressive social constructs—not natural states of being in need of protection and celebration—and that the well-documented threats of violence against women who defend women-only space are an abusive and unacceptable response to political disagreement.”

A long-time MichFest attendee described how while at the camp, women were free to be themselves, clothed or unclothed, walk alone at night and have no fear for their safety. She explained that there was always controversy at the camp. One year, a group of women involved in S&M (sadism and masochism) attended, which made other women uncomfortable because they argued it promoted violence against women (many there had histories of abuse). The camp organizers created a solution whereby the S&M women had their own “neighborhood” within the camp, just like there were neighborhoods for the over 60 group, the loud and rowdy group, or the alcoholics anonymous group. When women started to arrive with boys (not allowed in the camp), a neighborhood was developed at the camp’s entrance where women could stay with their children and have childcare services while they attended different events. According to a personal interview, the only issue that wasn’t solved through a dialogue with organizers was that of the inclusion of trans women. Although it is documented that there were trans women at MichFest, no one was ever asked about their sexual or gender identity upon entry. The removal of a trans woman from the camp and subsequent protests became a rallying cry for those who accused the feminists at MichFest of being TERFs. In alternative accounts, attendees state that the woman was removed for being disruptive, not because of her trans status.

While the women’s movement has at times been bigoted and exclusionary (as discussed earlier in this chapter and revisited in Chapter 9), the term “TERF” is not without its own baggage. It is viewed by those it describes as a slur and has been perceived as a way for some in the trans community to threaten cis women (lesbian or straight). According to Hungerford (2013) “TERF is not meant to be explanatory, but insulting. These characterizations are hyperbolic, misleading, and ultimately defamatory. They do nothing but escalate vitriol and fail to advance the conversation in any way.”

(Continued)
In the twenty-first century, some continue to use the concepts of waves to study feminist activism; they argue a new wave of feminism began in the United States and elsewhere in the 2010s. This “Fourth Wave” is centered on technological mobilization, social action and justice, bodies, and identity. The Fourth Wave uses the Internet to call out misogyny found in politics and culture, and its actions center around a young generation of women who are tech savvy. The #MeToo campaign is a prime example of tech mobilization in support of feminist issues, like sexual harassment and violence perpetrated by men in entertainment, business, and politics. The actions of feminists in the Fourth Wave are “defined by technology,” but they also manifest in real life through protests, whether that be an organized march, gathering, or even personal protests such as refusing to shave body hair.

Body and sexual positivity in the Fourth Wave also relates to gender identity. According to the feminist magazine *Bustle*, the Fourth Wave is queer and trans inclusive. The Fourth Wave does not just talk about queer theory or sex positivity, it was founded upon and celebrates the queering of gender. Building on the Riot grrrl movement in the Third Wave, it continues to reclaim language used to denigrate women. For instance, the slutwalk movement began in January 2011 as a response to the idea that a woman’s dress makes her vulnerable to rape.

However, others now argue that the idea of “waves” in the feminist movement has less meaning. The success of the Second Wave of the women’s movement in opening educational opportunities to women means that there are more and more women in academia, and nowadays it is common to see women’s centers and women’s and gender studies departments on college campuses. Feminist theorizing continues regardless of whether there is a wave or not. Collectively then, while women still have a ways to go to achieve true equality, feminist activists have ensured that great strides have been made. Furthermore, while there is often push back against gender studies or research into women’s interests, the academic and theoretical arms of the feminist movement are well established. The feminist movement, while far from unified in its vision or goals, has become more open to diverse perspectives and ways of seeing and thinking. As Kang, Lessard, Heston, and Nordmarken (2017) argue, “feminists have increasingly realized that a coalitional politics that organizes with other groups based on their shared (but differing) experiences of oppression, rather than their specific identify, is absolutely necessary.”

Thus, in the early twenty-first century, it is unclear where the feminist movement is headed. On the one hand there are definitely signs of renewed political activity on feminist causes in the aftermath of Hillary Clinton’s loss to Donald Trump in the 2016 general election (see Chapter 9). Rampton (2008) argues activism is “emerging because (mostly) young women and men realize that the Third Wave is either overly optimistic or hampered by blinders.” Feminism is moving from the academy and back into the realm of public discourse. Issues that were central to the earliest phases of the women’s movement are receiving national and international attention... sexual abuse, rape, violence against women, unequal pay, slut-shaming, the pressure on women to conform to a single and unrealistic body type.”
This emerging movement combines a First and Second Wave focus on concrete political issues and Third Wave consciousness about diverse perspectives. The Black Lives Matter movement (discussed in Chapter 9) is a prime example of contemporary activism around intersectional issues of oppression. The movement is a broad-based coalition of activists focused on the issue of police brutality against people of color. Cofounded by three Black women community organizers, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, the women created a “chapter-based, member-led organization whose mission it is to build local power and to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.” The organization’s website explicitly recognizes the unique needs of Black women, queer, trans, and disabled individuals.

Another example is the #MeToo movement, referenced above, that emerged in 2017, which we discuss in more detail in Chapter 9. The hashtag, originated by Tarana Burke—an activist who works with marginalized teens—has been used by women and, to a lesser extent, men and nonbinary individuals around the world to share stories of sexual harassment and assault. The hashtag gained prominence in reporting about the sexual assault and battery by movie producer Harvey Weinstein and has brought down dozens of prominent men such as NBC TV host Matt Lauer, U.S. Senator Al Franken (D-MN), and actor Kevin Spacey. As a result of this movement, millions of dollars have been raised for a legal fund, the Time’s Up fund, at the National Women’s Law Center to provide legal support to victims of sexual harassment and assault.

But as Susan Faludi (2017) argues,

Women’s activism has historically taken two forms. One is an expression of direct anger at the ways individual men use and abuse us. It’s righteous outrage against an unambiguous enemy with a visible face, the male predator who feeds on our vulnerability and relishes our humiliation. Mr. Weinstein’s face is the devil’s face du jour, and the #MeToo campaign fits squarely in this camp. The other form is less spectacular but as essential: It’s fighting the ways the world is structurally engineered against women. Tied to that fight is the difficult and ambiguous labor of building an equitable system within which women have the wherewithal and power to lead full lives.

Where the feminist movement goes and whether it takes on the labor of building a more equitable system remains to be seen.

**CONCLUSION**

Over the past several centuries, there has been significant progress in advancing the status of women in society. Prior to the First Wave of the feminist movement, women were routinely denied access to the public realm and full citizenship; indeed, most women did not enjoy any legal protections or bodily
autonomy whatsoever. Women have now secured the legal right to vote, access to education, and the workplace. These efforts have largely been successful when these movements have been able to focus on legal changes to improve the status of women. When these movements have a concrete goal upon which to focus, such as the right to vote or the passage of the ERA, they have been able to temporarily set aside differences in pursuit of the cause, which has allowed for significant progress.

But the move to achieve true equality for women and dismantle patriarchal systems is incomplete. As we have noted above and in Chapter 1, women identify with demographic traits other than shared sex, such as class, race, or religion, which makes it difficult for them to recognize their shared status as a cohesive marginalized group. Because of these cross-cutting identities and the social reification of sex roles, movements to advance women’s rights have always met with opposition from others, both men and women, making dismantling these roles a difficult challenge. It is far easier to unify movements around legal changes; changes to the private realm are more divisive. The association of women with the domestic realm, fundamental to patriarchal systems of oppression, is seen to many as natural; and to this day, women still assume a greater burden of the work in this realm, what many call the “second shift,” a concept we investigate further in Chapter 4. In order to better understand these cross-cutting identities and often divergent viewpoints among women, we turn now to an examination of public opinion to see how women differ from both men and each other in terms of the political opinions they hold.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Discus the difference between the private and public realms as it relates to women’s rights. Where have women made the most gains? Give some examples.

2. What rights did women have during the revolutionary war period? How did this differ if they were married or single? How was society structured to impact the rights of women?

3. Describe the activities and advances of the First Wave. Who were the key players? What were the key issues? What were the key events and key advancements? In what way was women’s activism during the First Wave tied to the abolition of slavery? Where were the tensions?

4. Describe the activities and advances of the Second Wave. Who were the key players? What were the key issues? What were the key events and key advancements? Where were the tensions within the women’s movement during this time?

5. What is the pay gap? How did this motivate the Second Wave? In what way does the pay gap persist?
6. In what ways are the Third and Fourth Waves different from the first two? Can we still talk about a “wave?” How did the women’s movement broaden and change after the Second Wave? What type of “feminisms” did we see emerge during the Third and Fourth Wave eras?

AMBITION ACTIVITIES

Analyzing Changes in Women’s Lives: As this chapter discusses, tremendous changes in the status of women have occurred over the past generations, particularly from the late 1960s and on. We have moved away from a society in which only two genders (male or female) were recognized and each sex was proscribed certain gender roles: previously the public realm was the domain of men and the private realm was the domain of women. Get a sense of how society has changed by interviewing a woman who was an adult during the period of change, that is, someone who was born before 1960. Talk to your mother, grandmother, or someone who is living in a nursing home. Ask her how things have changed, both generally and for women specifically, during her life. Did women go to college when she was growing up? Did women she knew work outside the home? What kind of jobs did most women have? What did her family expect of her? What life accomplishments were expected out of men? How did race factor into these expectations? For tips on how to conduct interviews, see Appendix 1.

Build Civic Skills in Student Organizations and Citizens’ Academy: Political scientists and sociologists are concerned about declining social capital in American society. Social capital refers to networks of people in community clubs, groups, and organizations that can be mobilized to address and resolve civic and political issues. These types of groups, where people learn valuable civic skills about organizing for collective action, have provided an important staging ground for every new wave of the women’s movement. Since the number of formally organized clubs and organizations in the United States has declined over the past two decades, it is useful to seek out opportunities to replace experiences—in registered student organizations on your college campus or in a Citizen Academy in your local community.

Discuss your participation in current clubs and organizations: Are you or your classmates members of any organizations, either on campus or in your communities? These might range from churches and unions in the community to honors clubs, professional societies, and sororities/fraternities on campus. Those who are members should describe any civic and political skills they have learned by being a member, as well as how these abilities could be used to coordinate collective action about a civic or political issue on campus, in your community.

Find new opportunities to participate on campus: Most college websites include a page dedicated to student life, with access to a complete list of registered student organizations. Explore the list and identify a list of campus clubs that you might like to join. Do you think you would gain access to social capital, as well as civic and political skills, by participating? Discuss why or why not.
Find new opportunities to participate in your community: Research whether or not there is a Citizens’ Academy in your community. Citizens’ Academies, defined as programs conducted by local officials to “help educate, inform and engage citizens,” encourage the growth of social capital, local democratic practices, and political change. Citizens’ Academies “are a relatively new phenomenon in U.S. local government . . . [as they] began to appear in the late 1990s,” and not all local governments have them even today. Local governments with academies invite citizens to attend classes about multiple topics, including city finances, crime, transportation, land use, and public works projects such as parks. During class time, citizens meet local leaders and government officials. Citizens attend classes for approximately 6 to 12 weeks and spend, on average, 20 hours in class time. What do local communities and citizens get out of this experience? The local communities get educated and engaged citizens, some of whom will go on to be involved in local government and politics. Citizens likely will better trust government leaders after learning more about them. If your community has a Citizens’ Academy, consider joining. If not, contact the National League of Cities about setting up a Citizens’ Academy in your region.

Brainstorm 1: Consider which women in your life, including yourself, might be interested in attending an academy and becoming active in public life. What issues/initiatives might these women pursue once they are public leaders, and how might participation in a Citizens’ Academy help them to pursue these issues? Try to identify at least three women whom you know personally and whom you believe would attend a Citizens’ Academy and why they might do so.

Brainstorm 2: A lot of the content presented in Citizens’ Academies pertain to policing, transportation, and public spaces. What about these local issues should be of particular concern to women? For instance, local policing includes responses to sex trafficking as well as hate crimes based on race and trans/queer identities. What might be taught in a Citizens’ Academy that pertains to women and a variety of women from diverse backgrounds? Design a teaching unit for one meeting of a Citizens’ academy that you believe pertains to a local issue of interest to women. What local guest speakers could teach in the unit, what issues would citizens learn about, and what policy changes could citizens discuss during the course of that unit?

Practice Using Parliamentary Procedure: One of the most important skills people learn in civic groups and local government is how to use parliamentary procedure to discuss an issue. Becoming comfortable with “parli-pro” can make participating in civic and political life less intimidating. Pick an issue related to class, such as the preferred format for an exam or whether to take attendance. Take turns being chair and use the guide below to practice the basic steps required to pass a motion.

The basic five steps for passing a motion include the following:

Be recognized—It’s important that a member of an organization first have the floor before presenting a motion or new order of business. This is typically done simply by the raise of a hand and recognition by the president or chair.
Motion is presented—The proper language you should use is, “I move that we . . .” An example of the correct language is simply, “I move that we [insert specific details here].”

Motion is seconded—The proper language is, “I second,” or “I second the motion.” Seconding a motion simply means that you are to move the item to discussion, seconding a motion does not necessarily indicate support.

Motion is discussed—Only motions that have been properly moved and seconded can be discussed. A common mistake in many meetings is that many ideas are discussed before any are presented in the form of a motion.

Vote is taken on motion—after an appropriate period of discussion, the chair should call for a vote for the motion on the floor. Voting can be conducted in several ways, a voice vote (“aye” or “nay”), by raising of hands, by roll call, or by secret ballot. Practice using all of these means of voting as each of you takes a turn at being chair.

KEY WORDS

First Wave 54  Sex-positive feminists 72
Glass ceiling 74  Social justice feminists 65
Lesbian feminism 73  Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminism 75
Pay gap 63  Transnational feminism 71
Queer theorists 73  Womanist 71
Relative deprivation 63
Second Wave 61

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