

The Waves of Feminism
Explorations in open space and dissent in the second wave feminist movement
and its contributions to the emergence of third wave feminism

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Feminism is a loaded term, shifting and negotiated over time and taking on different shapes and understandings depending on the perspective or location. In the spirit of third wave feminism's dedication to locating oneself and being clear on "where we are coming from" (Mitchell & Karaian, 2004, p.61), I would like to identify myself as a feminist, though I haven't been directly involved in an identifiable feminist movement. For me, feminism means to strive for equality and to recognize and resist systems of patriarchal oppression. Wading in the waves of feminism requires a careful negotiation of complex ideas, of which I have only been able to take up a few, and thus this study is only a beginning, allowing me only just to dip my toes in the water. It is also important that I recognize my privileged location as a white, heterosexual, able-bodied, well-educated young woman living in Canada – as a consequence of which I may not fully understand or grasp the complexities of the issues faced by women from diverse backgrounds not adequately represented in mainstream thought.

As a starting point for managing the complexity of the issue, I am settling on a definition of feminism drawing from both second and third wave writers. According to Jennifer Baumgartner and Amy Richards (2000), authors of *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* "feminism [is] a word that describes a social justice movement for gender equity and human liberation" (p.50). bell hooks (2000) also provides a well-known definition of feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression"

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(p.viii). While the term the ‘women’s movement’ has been widely used and used interchangeably with feminism and feminist movements, I feel it important to situate my exploration in those movements that specifically struggle for gender equity and liberation from sexist oppression. I thus will be using the term ‘feminist movement’ throughout this paper, as defined by Baumgartner, Richards, and hooks.

Using the framework of the waves of the feminist movement, this paper will argue that the second wave feminist movement created both figurative and literal manifestations of open space, allowing for expressions of dissent which ultimately contributed to the emergence and shape of the third wave feminist movement and to the advancement of the feminist project overall. For the purposes of this exploration, open space is conceived as a horizontal process with no central hierarchy which celebrates diversity and plurality and promotes respect and the free exchange of ideas (Whitaker, 2004; Sen & Keraghel, 2004; Wallerstein, 2004; Osterweil, 2004).

I will begin with an overview of the first, second, and third waves of feminism, briefly addressing the appropriateness in using the term waves in contextualizing the feminist movement. I will follow with an examination of notions of open space and dissent within the feminist movement, focusing specifically on the dissenting perspectives from women of colour and generational dissent. I will conclude with a brief examination of the ways in which these dissenting perspectives contributed to the growth of the feminist movement and will conclude by addressing potential future directions.

Within this analysis, I will be focusing on the Canadian feminist movement though will bring in the U.S. perspective where relevant. As noted by Young (2000), the Canadian and American feminist movements are considered more similar than any other national movements sharing similar roots in the student movement and a resistance to the rigid postwar gender roles, as well as the consumption of a similar and sometimes identical mass media.

The waves of feminism

The term ‘waves’ has been used to describe three main periods within the feminist movement, the first, second, and third wave. First wave feminism is commonly identified as women’s struggle for a legal identify that included the right to own property, form contracts, vote, run for political office, and sit in the Senate (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003; O’Neill, 2003). In Canada, women secured the right to vote in 1918, and the first wave ebbed quickly after, resurging in the 1960s with the second wave of feminism, marked by the

struggle for women's substantive equality with men with the goal of minimizing the differences between the genders in order to demand for equal treatment and to challenge the public/private divide (O'Neill, 2003). Most recently, third wave feminists came into consciousness in the 1990s, and in general terms this wave is characterized by the rejection of the 'universal woman' that was advanced by the second wave (ibid).

While the concept of waves provides a useful tool for compartmentalizing the various surges and resurgences within the larger feminist movement, many have noted some problematic elements in this characterization. The concept of waves may evoke feelings of dramatic surges and ebbs that do not properly describe the pace of feminism. Moreover, the attempts to define feminism and delineate its boundaries is problematic since feminism is expressed in a variety of ways from "militant political activism, to silent volunteerism, to academic research and writing, to the creation of works of art, to so much more" (Steenbergen, 2001, n.p.). Indeed, the feminist movement in Canada has been recognized as diverse, complex, and shifting over time, and the concept of waves thus risks essentializing generations of feminists in predetermined categories (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003) and oversimplifying feminism by glossing over the complexities (Mitchell & Karaian, 2004).

Bailey (1997) wonders whether the third wave deserves to be named as a wave in and of itself. She asserts that a wave can only be named in retrospect and in relation to its context and the waves around it. Since second wave feminists are "neither dead nor silent", Bailey (1997) wonders whether it is still too early for third wave feminists to "announce themselves" and whether a significant separation from second wave feminism has actually occurred (p.19). While the first and second wave differ in time with the first wave occurring in the late 19th century to the early 20th century, and the second wave emerging in the 1960s, there is no temporal distance between the second wave and the third wave with both overlapping on each other (Bailey, 1997).

Dicker and Peipmeier (2003) also point out that using the term waves implies that the second wave is over, when many of the goals set by the second wave have not yet been accomplished. For example, though second wave feminists struggled for public daycare in the 1970s, no national childcare policy exists despite 30 years of lobbying efforts (Hamilton, 2005). Moreover, there are many women today of the younger

generation who identify with the second wave, while there are baby boomer women who identify more strongly with the third wave (Alfonso and Trigilio, 1997).

Although many feminist writers have noted their uneasiness in using the term waves to organize feminist debates, the concept also denotes that feminist movements are being informed by particular locations and struggles. It could also be said that the notion of waves may adequately describe feminisms fluidity and lack of definable boundaries as well as reflect the continual growth and change of the feminist movement (Drake, 1997; Mitchell & Karaian, 2004). Moreover, using waves to depict the feminist movement may contribute towards a sense of solidarity and identity among young feminists with earlier feminist activity (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003). As a result of these strengths, though being conscious of its limitations, this paper is framed by the conceptualization of feminist movements as the first, second, and third waves.

The waves of feminism

First wave feminism emerged in a time where women were presumed to be emotionally and physically different from men. Women's natural sphere of endeavor and influence was within the home, which was expected to be a haven and sanctuary from an increasingly volatile and hostile world (Errington, 1993). According to the ideology of the time, middle-class women were particularly suited to be mothers and it was their responsibility to preserve the sanctity of the Canadian family, which was seen as the most basic and important social, economic, and political institution (Valverde, 1992). Given the priorities of mothering and morality, first wave feminism in Canada was largely marked by the emergence of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) which was expressly formed to stop the liquor trade believed to be destroying the lives of innocent women and children and feeding all of society's ills causing crime, poverty, and sexual immorality (ibid).

Women of the WCTU argued that it was not their right but their obligation to participate in the public sphere in order to infuse the public world with a domestic female morality and in essence save Canadian society by "exerting a feminine influence" and to "promote national enthusiasm and affection" (Errington, 1993, p.76). Between around 1880 and 1920, there was an increased activism and awareness among Canadian women that propelled them out of the isolation of their homes by a sense of religious duty and spirit of expanding opportunity, combined with their apprehension about the state of Canadian society and

their special place within it (Errington, 1993). Women came together to redress social ills such as temperance, religious instruction, improvements in the workplace, better housing, facilities for single women, and state run public health and child welfare programs (ibid).

Indeed, it was the concern over Canada's social ills and the need to save Canadian society that motivated women to fight for the vote (ibid). The movement for the vote began in the late 1880s through the formation of local and provincial suffrage organizations of which many also lobbied for the opening of schools and universities to women (ibid). After receiving the provincial franchise in the Western provinces, first wave feminists shifted their focus to the national stage receiving the franchise in 1918 with the Women's Franchise Act, followed by a new Dominion Elections Act in 1920 (ibid). Although women were finally confirmed as 'persons' under the law in 1929, women in Quebec continued to be denied the right to vote in provincial elections. Feminist activity continued in Quebec throughout the 1920s and 1930s with strong support galvanizing in the late 1930s with the leadership of the League of Women's Rights and resulting in the provincial franchise in 1940 (ibid).

Despite the achievements of first wave feminists in acquiring the right to vote, women's preoccupation remained in the home and family and the political victories of first wave feminists did little to change women's role in the home. Yet, as noted by Hamilton (2005), this preoccupation was due in part to their lack of formal education and economic autonomy which resulted in their dependence on men for the wellbeing of themselves and their children (ibid). However, while "first wave feminists left the family untouched by systematic critique", their struggle for the right to a higher education, economic independence, and some citizenship rights, first wave feminists laid the groundwork for later generations of women (Hamilton, 2005, p.44).

Though the first wave of feminism in Canada is perceived as receding around when women secured the right to vote, first wave feminists continued to press for protective legislation for women and children both at home and in the workplace reflected in the married women's property acts and minimum wage legislation passed in the 1920s (Errington, 1993). Despite the minimal attention given to feminist activity, professional organizations and associations continued to struggle for social change and women began to get

involved in political parties and unions (ibid). Furthermore, after participating in the labour force during the Second World War, many women experienced economic and personal independence translating into a new self-confidence in their abilities. Increasing numbers of women began to challenge their role in society. More and more girls were completing high school, and more and more women were attending university, demanding entry into professional programs, entering the work force, and getting involved in politics (ibid). Though women continued to be subjected to significant gender inequality, and while these activities may not be perceived as feminist activism, women in the 1940s and 1950s acquired increased education, affluence, and awareness thereby laying the foundation for “a new wave of feminism to emerge in the 1960s” (ibid, p.85).

This new wave of feminism is termed the second wave with feminists coalescing around the belief that women and men were not inherently different, but that these differences were socially constructed (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003). Women began to question the very foundation of society as paternalistic and male-dominated with many Canadian women agreeing that the traditional notions of women’s place in society needed to change (Errington, 1993). This position stood in stark contrast to the first wave which presumed a wide and innate difference between men and women (O’Neill, 2003).

Although many women had begun working outside of the home, their domestic responsibilities and self images had remained virtually unchanged and they continued to face the pressure of prioritizing their role as mothers (Black, 1993). As a result, women began to pressure men for support at home and began to pressure the government for more supportive policies on childcare, maternity leave, and higher wages (Hamilton, 2005). Feminists identified the ‘glass ceiling’ where women’s participation was stalled at a certain level. For example, while they could vote, few could become lawmakers or politicians; while they could graduate from university, they rarely could become judges or surgeons; and while they could work for pay, they could not receive the same pay as men (Black, 1993). As such, the struggles of the second wave included equal opportunities in employment and education, access to childcare and abortion, and the fight for violence against women (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003).

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, struck in 1966, gathered together dozens of women’s organizations and collected reports from women from across Canada on their personal experiences. The commission resulted in 167 recommendations representing the “reincarnation in Canada of

liberal feminism... with a potentially radical future” (Hamilton, 2005, p.45). The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) was formed in 1972 to lobby the government to implement the recommendations resulting from the commission’s report (ibid). This institutionalization of the feminist project aimed for “equality of opportunity for women in all sectors of Canadian society”, yet radical and socialist feminists pushed for substantive structural change in Canada in order to achieve true equality and criticized the more liberal agenda to reform existing institutions (Hamilton, 2005, p.47).

Women of diverse backgrounds and locations engaged in the second wave of the feminist movement. As a result, perspectives, interpretations, demands, and actions related to gender inequality and power varied according to one’s social location and shifted depending on the context and issues of the time (Hamilton, 2005). While some feminists sought to “complete the agenda of the first women’s movement” by focusing on the role of women in the public sphere, the oppression of women in the private sphere and its link to subordination in the public sphere also became a central struggle for the movement (Hamilton, 2005, p.57). However, the centrality of the home and the family as the locus of feminist struggle was contested by women of colour, differently-abled women, poor women, lesbian women, and minority women who claimed that their experience as a woman was quite different than the white, middle-class woman and that their struggles centered around much more than just the home and family (Hamilton, 2005). Feminist action also focused on sexuality and reproductive rights represented by women’s right to sexual pleasure, the control of their own bodies, policy issues around male sexual violence, legal issues around divorce, pornography, and political and legal struggles around rape and sexual assault (Black, 1993; Steenbergen, 2001).

Women’s organizations, in the form of rape crisis centres, homes for battered women, health centres, abortion referral services, women’s studies programs, and women’s magazines, began to emerge as offshoots of the student movement and “liberal-feminist” groups in order to exert political pressure (Black, 1993, p.154). In the 1980s, new, and often small and local, women’s groups also began to emerge to represent the needs of specific categories of women which allowed women from marginalized groups to voice their concern that the majority white, heterosexual feminists must begin to take into account the differences in race, religion, ethnicity, different abilities, ages, and sexual orientations (Black, 1993). In the U.S., this group

of women was named “third world feminists” who called for a recognition of their intersectional identity to be recognized within the white, mainstream, middle-class feminist movement (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p.9). These women began to question the essentialist and universal category of “woman” and instead advanced the notion that gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality intersect in their identity formation and that they experience oppression on many levels, not just as women (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003).

As noted by Dicker and Piepmeier (2003), this critique and debate within the second wave opened a space for the emergence of a third wave of feminism. Heywood and Drake (1997) also note that the critiques by women of colour and coalition work done by U.S. third world feminists helped to bring a third wave into being. Additional dissent emerged in the 1980s with a re-emergence of a discussion of women’s sexual pleasure as a necessary step towards women’s liberation with “pro-sex” feminists critiquing second wave feminism for rigid moral standards and an anti-sex attitude (Steenbergen, 2001).

These dissenting views are seen to have led to the formation of a third wave in the 1990s which rejected the notion of the ‘universal woman’ that was advanced by the second wave (O’Neill, 2003). While it is debated as to which critiques stimulated the third wave, it is generally agreed that notions of dissent did indeed shape the emergence of this ‘new’ brand of feminism. Some claim that anti-racist feminists who sought to deconstruct the white mainstream feminist thought as racist and classist were responsible for the third wave (Dua, 1999; Pinterics, 2001; Drake, 1997). Others view the emergence of the third wave as tied to generational differences with dissatisfied Generation X’ers dissenting against a movement which they viewed as rigid (Pinterics, 2001; Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003; Orr, 1997; Alfonso & Trigilio, 1997).

There are also those who view the third wave as a “reinvigorated feminist movement” with goals that are similar to the second wave but with an emphasis on women’s diverse locations (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p.10). This ‘reinvigoration’ also incorporates the changing world which has impacted women in different ways such as global capitalism and environmental destruction (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003); as well as incorporates elements of the second wave critique of the beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power relations (Heywood & Drake, 1997). Others still see the third wave as intricately linked to the anti-feminist movement (Pinterics, 2001).

Many claim that those who identify with third wave feminism grew up with freedoms that those from the second wave fought for, such as women’s acceptance in the labour force, initial stages of affirmative

action, a more dominant discourse on violence against women, and a greater acceptance of different sexualities (Pinterics, 2001; Steenbergen, 2001). Some may also argue that feminists of the third wave take these struggles and gains by the second wave for granted (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003) and therefore have a more “ambivalent identification” with feminism (Henry, 2003, p.219).

Findlen (1995) offers a slightly different perspective. She observes that the third wave represents the “first generation for whom feminism has been entwined in the fabric of our lives” which may result in a less unified or categorizable generation yet one that understands their differences, their role in feminism, and therefore can bring themselves fully to the table (p.xxi-xiv). Ultimately, while third wave feminists grew up with greater freedoms, sexism (as well as racism, homophobia, and classism) does indeed continue to persist albeit a sexism that is more imaginatively hidden and difficult to pinpoint, perhaps making it equally, or more, challenging to address.

Though third wave feminism is often marked by notions of dissent, those who identify with the third wave insist that it is characterized by much more than just critique. Indeed, third wave feminist theorizing consists of concepts of multiple identifications, complexity, and ambiguities and cautions against thinking in dichotomous terms (Pinterics, 2001; Steenbergen, 2001; Bailey, 1997; Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003; O’Neill, 2003). The priority for third wave feminism is the inclusion of various genders, sexualities, ethnicities, races, and classes through grassroots modes of organizing (Heywood & Drake, 1997). This is represented in the use of personal narratives, the Internet, and zines with the constant thread of taking on feminism at the individual, personal level (Pinterics, 2001; O’Neill, 2003).

Many authors (such as Pinterics, 2001; Bailey, 1997; Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003; Heywood & Drake, 1997; and Orr, 1997) point to two seminal collections as defining the advent of the third wave: Rebecca Walker’s *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* and Barbara Findlen’s *Listen Up: Voices From the Next Feminist Generation*. Both anthologies seek to offer diverse accounts of third wave feminism drawing attention to the complexity while avoiding a cohesive narrative (Pinterics, 2001; Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003).

This is not to say that the third wave does not pay attention to building coalitions and networking.

Third wave feminists seek to integrate what has worked from existing theories into new theories without the aid of a large umbrella organization (Pinterics, 2001). Instead, smaller organizations would retain their own mission and goals and cooperate with the larger organizations as needed (Pinterics, 2001). Heywood and Drake (1997) provide a useful summary of third wave feminism as “the development of modes of thinking that can come to terms with the multiple, constantly shifting bases of oppression in relation to the multiple, interpenetrating axes of identity, and the creation of coalition politics based on these understandings” (p.3).

An undercurrent of ‘anti-feminism’ or ‘post-feminism’ also began to emerge in the 1990s leading many to interpret feminism as an antiquated and fragmented movement (Steenbergen, 2001; Heywood & Drake, 1997). Due to the third wave feminist critique of the second wave, it is important to note that some consider third wave feminism as synonymous with anti-feminism. Anti-feminist thought emerged around the same time as the third wave and is marked by the writings of Katie Roiphe, Christina Hoff Sommers, and Rene Denfield who suggest that feminism has failed women. Roiphe rejected rape statistics stating that they encourage the victimization of women, while Hoff Sommers and Denfield advanced the notion that feminism achieved gender equality and therefore the feminist movement is no longer relevant (Pinterics, 2001; Steenbergen, 2001; Heywood & Drake, 1997). All of these women were white, heterosexual, and well educated and portrayed feminism as anti-men, anti-sex, and that it victimized women by focusing on sexual danger (Steenbergen, 2001). Orr (1997) claims these “feminist dissenters” have become entangled in the third wave discourse and have been constructed by the media as rebels against established feminists (p.34).

Though the anti-feminists or post-feminists are certainly dissenters, their ideas can be placed outside of the feminist project due to their rejection of feminism or their claim that the goals of the feminist movement have been accomplished. Third wave feminists differ from this standpoint through their involvement in a variety of feminist issues, and their insistence that the feminist movement must indeed continue (Pinterics, 2001; Orr, 1997). As Steenbergen (2001) notes, the critiques of third wave feminists are intended to advance the feminist project even though the media has latched onto anti-feminist rhetoric leading many to believe that feminism is over. Orr (1997) notes how anti-feminist writing cannot be categorized as third wave because of their avoidance of navigating the contradictions of feminism believing instead that there is a “pure outside” where women are free from oppression lacking any recognition of the complexity and difference among women (p.35).

As a result of anti-feminist's and post-feminist's rejection of the feminist project, I will not be incorporating their ideas into the analysis of dissent from younger women. Instead, I will be focusing on those women who continue to identify themselves as feminists and remain committed to hooks' notion ending sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.

Open space and dissent in the feminist movement

In the context of the World Social Forum (WSF), the notion of open space is conceived as a space that is "socially horizontal" with "no leaders" and relatively undirected "without an owner" (Whitaker, 2004, p.113; Sen & Keraghel, 2004). There is no official spokesperson, there is no central hierarchy, and the only shared commitment is an opposition to neo-liberal globalisation (Wallerstein, 2004). Whitaker (2004) likens this concept to a "factory of ideas or an incubator" where participants can work towards their goals and give life to new movements with more specific aims yet which also amplify the wider struggle. Indeed, it is its open and horizontal formulation that both challenges traditional and unequal power structures and also allows the WSF to serve as a tool for struggle (Whitaker, 2004; Osterweil, 2004). Keraghel and Sen (2004) add that an open space also allows for the "celebration of diversity and plurality" (p.484) where participants feel respected and where ideas can be freely exchanged (Whitaker, 2004). Using this concept of open space as a framework, I will examine how both figurative and literal open spaces were created within the feminist movement that fostered the sharing and development of ideas, thereby further advancing the feminist project overall. These spaces, in their quest for openness and inclusiveness, provided an opportunity for dissent to be expressed, thus allowing for new movements with more specific aims to emerge – and thereby spurring on new ways of feminist thinking such as anti-racist feminist thought and a feminist project that was more inclusive of women with diverse identifications.

The first and perhaps more striking feature of the feminist movement in Canada is that those involved in it created various kinds of spaces marked by a horizontal make-up with no leaders or official spokespeople which viewed all women as equal and with the shared goal to oppose patriarchal oppression. Indeed, the feminist movement in Canada has never been a single or central organization with one leader. This is reflected in separate movements in English Canada and Quebec in the first wave of feminism, and in the

continued multiplicity throughout the second wave with Québécoise women connecting their feminist struggles to the struggle for independence from Canada; and separate organizations emerging based on sexual orientation, and to meet the unique needs and fight discrimination of Aboriginal women, black women, and women from various cultural groups (Hamilton, 2005).

The similarities with the concept of open space in the WSF are obvious. Examples include woman-centered collectives and forums that allowed women to share information, challenge patriarchal notions, and resolve women's oppression (Steenbergen, 2001); and consciousness-raising groups that offered a space for women to discuss their personal experiences and feelings thereby allowing them to discover that the challenges they faced were reflective of a larger patriarchal system of oppression (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003). In Canada, hundreds of groups met weekly in the early 1970s providing women with the opportunity to "recognize, reinterpret, and change" their living conditions, priorities, identities, and careers (Hamilton, 2005).

However, an important distinction must be made. While the WSF adopts a conceptualization of open space that allows anyone who is "critical of and/or concerned with neo-liberal globalization and its impacts" to participate, many spaces created through the feminist movement were only open to women (Keraghel and Sen, 2004, p.487). As such, the notion of open space in the feminist movement was in a way a contradiction – although women from diverse backgrounds and perspectives were welcome in these spaces, anyone who did not fit into the mainstream conceptualization of 'woman' were excluded. This has come under particular scrutiny by some third wave feminists who recognize that the category of 'woman' is fluid and unfixed and seek to include the transgendered community in the feminist movement (Mandell, 2004).

Ultimately, this form of organising, and the spaces created for this kind of exchange, changed women's consciousness about their identity. Women's centres also began to emerge in the 1970s to provide places for women to connect with other women involved in the feminist movement and come together to organise for social and political change (ibid). Spaces with more specific purposes such as women's shelters, rape crisis centres, and organisations to serve particular populations such as immigrant women, domestic workers, ethnic groups, and women with disabilities were also created (ibid). Feminist-inspired women's caucuses also surfaced within trade unions and political parties which sought to pressure for gender equity in leadership positions and the inclusion of women's issues on organisational agendas (ibid). On university

campuses, women's studies classes also began to materialise offering feminist courses and a space for young women to examine the role of women in society.

Jo Freeman (1975), writing in the midst of the second wave, critically reflected on the open structure of the younger section of the feminist movement. These small decentralised groups with a "lack of formal organization, an emphasis on participation, a sharing of tasks, and the exclusion of men" (Freeman, 1975, p.224) also share many common traits with the WSF's notion of open space. These small groups of women followed a general policy of "structurelessness" and advocated a lack of hierarchy (ibid, p. 224). With its foundations in participatory democracy, all women were assumed to be equally capable and the contributions of each participant were encouraged and equally valued (ibid). These groups spread widely and the concept of "leaderless, structureless groups" eventually dominated this section of the movement (ibid, p.235). This open structure also permeated the structure of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in the U.S. with local chapters disregarding the structure proposed by the national office and simply developing their own organisational processes (ibid). This translated into "loose' chairing of meetings, unstructured, occasionally irrelevant, discussion, expression of personal feelings and enthusiasm, avoidance of authoritarian and domineering styles, and decision making by consensus" (ibid, p.230-231).

"Rap groups" emerged from these small groups where women discussed and analyzed their experiences as a group (ibid, p.235). Rap groups were easy to organise and eventually became the most widespread practice of this younger branch of the second wave and served to bring increased numbers of women into the feminist movement (ibid).

The 1970s also saw the creation of women's collectives including book, magazine, and newspaper publishing which aimed to bring women's issues that may have been rejected by mainstream publishers to the wider public (Hamilton, 2005). This likely provided a foundation from which the third wave was able to utilise texts as a strategy for raising awareness and practicing activism. Zines, usually alternative and non-commercial publications which creators publish and distribute themselves, have emerged as an important outlet in the third wave for many women to share their own personal stories, reclaim their culture and language from the mainstream characterisations of women, and have provided an avenue to critique the

mainstream media (Bell, 2001; Pinterics, 2001). Zines allow for an accessible space for young feminists to share ideas and political views on feminist activities while also serving as an ‘incubator’ for ideas by inspiring other forms of activism (Pinterics, 2001). Along with zines, hybrid publications such as *Bust* have also been produced to fill a gap between zines and mainstream publications (Orr, 1997). The Internet, particularly email, websites, and chat groups have also served as an important space for the feminist community where women and girls can communicate with others as well as organise and share information (Orr, 1997; Pinterics, 2001, O’Neill, 2003). Both the use of zines and the Internet have provided a relatively safe, supportive, and accessible space for women to express themselves and discuss feminism (Orr, 1997).

However, these various spaces are not without their limitations. Freeman (1970) notes how the “tyranny of structurelessness” was represented in the uneven distribution tasks, roles, and resources among its participants. While no official structures of authority existed, decision-making processes continued to occur demonstrating that circuits of power were simply masked by the appearance of structurelessness (Freeman, 1975). Freeman (1970) claims that structurelessness actually served as a “smokescreen” for the naturally emerging structures and thus the perception of horizontality provided a means to exercise power in a hegemonic manner. This “myth of structurelessness” meant that no attempts could be made to challenge the use of power within the movement because there were no mechanisms to do so (Freeman, 1975, p.238). Interestingly, this issue has also emerged within the seemingly non-hierarchical structure of the WSF where important decisions are made with a lack of transparency as to why, how, and by whom these decisions were made (Wallerstein, 2004).

Moreover, while the rap groups in the 1970s were conceived of as an open space for women, they were explicitly closed to men thus transforming an open space into a closed one. Keraghel and Sen (2004) similarly note this challenge within the WSF which is ultimately restricted to those with a “clear and defined position” and therefore question whether this is indeed an open space (p.488). Similarly, while these structureless groups attempted to be more participatory, they are reliant on friendship networks to keep them afloat and therefore can often be exclusionary for those who are not tied into that particular network (Freeman, 1975). Freeman (1975) also critiques the unstructured groups of the younger section of the second wave as taking a great deal of time, energy and patience for long and exhausting decision-making processes (p.231). The focus then for these groups is spent on “group processes rather than group ends” (Freeman,

1975, p.240). As a result, the smaller rap groups suffered when participants wanted to go beyond simply expressing their own experiences to taking action (ibid). In discussing some of the central critiques of the notion of open space as it relates to the WSF, Wallerstein (2004) notes that the WSF has experienced similar challenges being perceived as nothing more than a “talk fest” which stops short of acting on the reflections and discussions occurring at the Forum (p.635). This reflects “the classic dilemma of social movement organizations” - that social change requires “tightly” organised and hierarchal organisation which conflicts with the “participatory style” required to nourish support and the democratic ideals of the movement’s goals (Freeman, 1975, p.233).

Textual and technological strategies of the third wave also challenge genuine openness. Though the Internet has provided an important space for many feminists, it requires access to computers, software, a particular set of language skills, and therefore may not be accessible to all people, particularly marginalised groups (Orr, 1997). Several zines and hybrid magazines have also been criticised for their shift towards a mainstream publication complete with advertising and glossy pages. Bell (2001) notes how this trend undermines the genuine expression of ideas as these publications become obliged to their corporate sponsors and seek to meet professional standards determined by the mainstream culture for which they were striving to provide an alternative.

While the genuine openness of the women-centered spaces can be challenged, literal spaces such as women’s centres, consciousness-raising groups, and rap groups as well as textual spaces such as zines, hybrid publications, and the Internet fit well within Whitaker’s (2004) notion of open space. Many scholars (Orr, 1997; Freeman, 1970; Steenbergen, 2001; Dicker and Piepmeier, 2003; Hamilton, 2005; Pinterics, 2001; O’Neill, 2003; Bell, 2001) noted how such spaces provided a relatively open and accessible space for women to share information and ideas and mobilize and organize for change. Characteristics such as an emphasis on participation, the valuing of all contributions, and a lack of formal organization created space for specific needs to be raised. Akin to Whitaker’s notions of the incubator, smaller groups were formed as a result of these open spaces to meet the needs of specific groups such as women immigrants, domestic workers, differently abled women, as well as women who suffered from abuse and ultimately provided a

venue for the expression of dissent which contributed to the formation of the third wave.

Indeed, many third wave writers note that they owe a great deal to their second wave “sisters” who brought issues of sexuality and sexual diversity to the fore (Delombard, 1995, p.33) as well as awakened many to the deeply rooted issue of gender inequality (Allyn & Allyn, 1995). Walker (1995) also acknowledges that both second wave and ‘third world’ feminists have provided third wave feminists with the language and images to allow for an examination of diversity that expose contradictions and that pay heed to the politics hybridity and coalitions. The following pages will explore in more detail two dissenting perspectives which exemplify the contradictions within the feminist movement referred to by Walker.

Both the first and second wave have been criticized for their failure to document the histories of women of colour and in identifying racism as an issue for feminist organizing. In fact, first wave feminism perpetuated stereotypes of women of colour as corrupted victims of their culture who were unable to function as real mothers and thus were “active agents” of society’s degeneration (Valverde, 1992, p.13). This positioning allowed white women to capitalize on their privilege and elevate their status arguing for the right to vote based on their greater morality and purity thereby excluding women of colour from first wave feminism (Dua, 1999; Valverde, 1992; Carty, 1999). By depicting themselves as the ‘mothers of the race’, first wave feminists used racist assumptions to secure a distinctive role in the public sphere as protectors of ‘the race’ while also depicting women of colour as one homogenous group who were inferior due to their racial characteristics, not their gender (Valverde, 1992, p.6). Indeed, one of the most prominent Canadian first wave feminists, Emily Murphy outlined her views that “Nordic’ races were inherently superior” in her book *The Black Candle*; and the WCTU’s version of feminism was narrowed to include only those women from dominant cultures who viewed themselves as innately morally superior (Valverde, 1992, p.15).

However, racism within feminist discourse is not a fixture of a bygone era. Indeed, Brand (1999) notes that feminist themes so far have “refused to be informed by Black women’s lives” while instead lending themselves to racist, capitalist, and imperialist ideologies (p.84). Feminists remain implicated in reproducing the marginalization of women of colour by continuing to reconstruct a particular version of history that relies on mainstream sources in which women of colour are absent (Cooper, 2000). Third World women in both advanced capitalist states as well as former colonies are still pushed to the margins of Western feminist discourse (Carty, 1999, p.41). As noted by Carty (1999), Third World women are depicted

as “monolith, pitied as passive, dismissed as tradition-bound” in a discourse that “mirrors the Empire... and of global capitalism” (p.41).

Another common critique of the feminist movement, whether referring to the first, second, or third wave, is that it has been taken over by white, middle-class women who focus on the privatization of the family. This white, middle-class version of feminist thought focuses on how women have been relegated to the domestic sphere of the household and focuses on gender oppression as the central cause of women’s inequality, yet sidesteps an analysis of how race and class impact on women’s experiences both inside and outside of the house as well as how their white privilege affords them the opportunity to engage in the struggle in the first place (Carty, 1999). This focus on domestic gender relations overlooks the experience of many women around the world who have not only had to work both inside and outside the home in order to survive (and often in the homes of privileged white women), but are also overrepresented in domestic work such as maids, nurses’ aides, and nannies (Carty, 1999, p.42). The discourse of feminism universalizes the experiences of women by lumping Third World women’s multiple identifications into the category of ‘gender’. Though feminist discourse claims to empower women, it simultaneously ignores the discrepancies between their lives, and those of most of the world’s women. In other words, second wave feminists, who were largely white and middle class, often focused on gender oppression as the central cause of women’s inequality while ignoring how race interacts with one’s experience as a woman (Cooper, 2000).

Anti-racist feminist thought has emerged to challenge this feminist discourse claiming that women of colour experience gender in very different ways from white, middle-class women (Carty, 1999; Pinterics, 2001; Dua, 1999). Wane (2004) notes how Black Canadian feminists seek out a liberatory practice where the historical, social, cultural, and economic relationship of women of African descent can be analyzed and illuminated. For example, in contrast with white, middle-class women who do not hold a class consciousness and thus focus their struggle in relation to white middle-class men; an emancipatory feminism relevant to Black women must confront the conditions of capitalism and production that have impacted Black women (Brand, 1999). Ultimately, anti-racist feminist thought advocated for a feminist project that developed a “self-conscious politics of partiality” and one that was not conceived as a “political home” for all women

(Ang, 1995, p.57). This translates into a precarious balance between the necessity to reach out and include all women, yet simultaneously risks “tokenism and further marginalization” (Lee, 1995, p.205).

The literature of the third wave interrogated mainstream feminism for its role in perpetuating racial differences between women and examined the ways in which the interests of white, middle-class women shaped the contours of mainstream feminist thought (Dua, 1999). Writers began questioning how feminism has been implicated in shaping a racialised nation-state and the subjugation of women of colour (ibid). Young women began to question second wave feminist theorising by pushing the boundaries of who and what constitutes feminism and critiquing the second wave for universalising the experience of women and for advancing theories that centred on the sameness of women (Pinterics, 2001). The rejection of gender as a transcendental force over multiple identities such as race, sexuality, or ability “sets [third wave feminists] at odds with the previous generation of feminists” (O’Neill, 2003, p.179). Third wave feminists represent a desire to openly address the contradictions of second wave feminism and to challenge the repressive and restrictive nature of the second wave thereby necessitating a break and a reformulation of feminism (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, O’Neill, 2003).

The third wave, often described as including young women, is replete with familial metaphors and noted for its generational differences (Bailey, 1997; Henry, 2003). The relationship between the second and third wave is particularly well suited to generational comparison due to its adherence to the thirty-year model of generational birth with the second wave emerging in the 1960s and the third wave emerging in the 1990s resulting in identifying the second wave feminists as mothers to their third wave daughters (Henry, 2003). This is reflected in Baumgartner and Richards’ (2000) critique of second wave feminists who attempt to “[treat] us like daughters... who need to be molded” (p.233). Ultimately, the relationship between second and third wave feminists is characterised as “pervasive and debilitating” (Detloff, 1997, p.78), “confrontational and uncooperative, even hostile” (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p.15).

On the other hand, second wave feminists have critiqued the third wave feminist movement for forgetting their struggles and ungratefully homogenising the second wave movement to a definable set of ideas that distorts a varied social movement (Detloff, 1997; Pinterics, 2001; Bailey 1997; Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003). Other second wave feminists note that some of the tactics and theories that the third wave attempts to reinvent may already exist resulting in a loss of valuable information and resources by assuming

current challenges faced by women have no historical precedent (Steinem, 1995, p. xix; Bailey, 1997; Orr, 1997; Davis, 1995). Moreover, second wave feminists are critical of the individualist trend within third wave feminism, characterised as a “feminist free-for-all”; and the perception that everything and everyone can fit within the third wave without a core set of beliefs or shared goals thus creating a sense that the third wave is less activist with no definable sense of a movement (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p.17; Pinterics, 2001). Similarly, some (such as Steinem, 1995; Bailey, 2001) have argued that while the voices and perspectives of the so-called third wave are valued and important, they may not constitute an “essentially new” movement (Bailey, 1997, p.23) and instead are more representative of the process of growing into adulthood as young women attempt to determine their particular version of feminism (Pinterics, 2001; Henry, 2003).

Although dissent has been a prevalent theme within the feminist movement, this dissent has provided opportunities for growth and development to a more inclusive version of feminism. As noted by bell hooks (1984), feminism is “a theory in the making” which necessitates criticism, deeper analysis, and the exploration of new possibilities. In considering feminism as a theory in the making, it becomes clear that dissenting views that challenge homogenous or universalistic notions of a woman’s experience help to both deconstruct feminism as well as add layers to it thereby contributing to the process of critique, analysis, and opening of new possibilities which hooks advocated as necessary for the growth of feminism.

Anti-racist feminists dissented against the dominant white, middle-class, heterosexual feminism and illuminated the ways in which feminists may be implicated in the oppression of other women by ignoring how women of colour differently experience their gender. Moreover, by reproducing ethnocentric historical narratives, feminists may continue to be implicated in a racist feminism by replicating the history of a ‘white’ Canada. As a result, anti-racist feminist thought has allowed for the questioning of whether a universal notion of gender exists or ever did exist; brings feminists a step closer to confronting and coming to terms with racialising processes in which they may have participated; places the experiences of women of colour at the centre; confronts the ways in which conditions of capitalism and production have differentially impacted women of colour; and contributes to a liberatory practice where voice, space, and histories of women of colour can be reclaimed (Dua, 1999; Wane, 2004; Brand, 1999).

In their attempt to reject the universal woman, third wave feminists have deconstructed second wave feminist thought and added new complexities to feminism by resisting boundaries, labels, or categories and pushing the confines of what constitutes feminism. As a result, third wave feminism attempts to bring in women of all identifications and seeks to acknowledge the ways in which women's identities intersect. While the second wave focused more exclusively on women's issues such as violence against women, access to jobs, and reproductive choices, third wave feminists have taken up issues that intersect with women's experiences, such as anti-poverty work due to women's high representation among the homeless and the poor, or anti-globalisation activism to protest the exploitation of women in the global south from economic corporate globalisation (ibid). The third wave has also expanded the second wave's motto 'the personal is political' by inserting personal narratives and utilising their subjectivities in providing the personal elements to feminist theory and action (ibid, p.66). Third wave feminists have also attempted to synthesise what has been gleaned from second wave theories, expose what doesn't work, and combine them into new theories and strategies for feminist organisation; as well as take second wave feminism one step further by making institutional gains in law, legislation, and policy in those areas advocated by the second wave (ibid).

The World March of Women (WMW) provides an example of how dissent in the feminist movement has fostered its evolution and growth as well as a more explicit connection to the World Social Forum. Conway (2006) notes that the debates of the second wave of feminism regarding how women differently experience their gender depending on their geographical location has led to a greater sensitivity to these differences as well as a commitment to fighting inequality not only between women and men, but among women. These debates therefore contributed to a "transnational feminism that was also anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist" (Conway, 2006, n.p.). This transnational feminism is represented in the WMW as well as by the leadership of women from the global South in new international networks and conferences (Miles, 2000).

The WMW was initiated by the Fédération des femmes du Québec in the early 1990s as a ten-day "Marche du pain et des roses" and is now a permanent and worldwide movement of thousands of women's groups unified with a common purpose (Conway, 2006). The first march in Québec made demands on the provincial government, attempted to make connections across divisions in the movement, and hoped to boost grassroots feminism (ibid). The success of the Québec march led to the introduction of a World March at the UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 eventually leading to the first World March in 2000 and a Women's Global Charter for Humanity in 2005 (ibid). The goals of the WMW were reached through "tried and true" practices that were present in earlier feminist waves such as talking together, sharing stories, and finding common interests (World March of Women, 2007).

The WMW represents an expression of global solidarity, and the participation of feminists at the World Social Forum provides an opportunity ripe for the construction of partnerships and coalitions both among feminists as well as among others active in the WSF thereby fostering the growth of the feminist project overall (Alvarez et al. 2003). As noted by Miles (2000), Canadian feminism must recognize that women's needs, perspectives, opinions, and priorities vary in diverse and often divergent ways. As such, we must challenge the system as a whole in order to uncover our common interest in social change ensuring solidarity among women of diverse identifications and geographic areas to "play a role in the vibrant and multi-centered global feminist movement" (Miles, 2000, n.p.). In transnational feminism, it is therefore of central importance to take a lesson from the history of the feminist movement to reject approaches that privilege "one form of power globally", recognize how power intersects many spheres of social life, and avoid universalizing theories of feminism (Eschle, 2002, p.330). This will necessitate new strategies for ensuring open space to facilitate dialogue across linguistic and cultural differences, address the power relations between participants, and enable the poorest to participate (ibid). According to Eschle (2002) these discussions, which were initiated in the feminist movement, and are continued today point to a "more democratic future for feminism" (p.333).

Conclusion: The challenges of open space and dissent

While open space within the feminist movement has allowed for the expression of dissent which has in turn helped to build a more inclusive feminism, it has also created fractures within the movement. Perhaps if feminists could work across generations, it might be possible for dissent to foster positive debate in a process of negotiation where feminists of all ages and identifications may be able to accomplish a greater amount of needed change (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003). However, the strength of second and third wave feminism has been its self-awareness and self-criticism which has allowed for the identification of shortfalls and the continued revitalisation of feminism and feminist theory. It is when all feminist voices are part of the dialogue that feminism will truly be able to move forward (Henry, 2003).

As noted at the beginning of this paper, wading in the waves of feminism is a daunting and complex task. As such, there are many holes left in this exploration of which I will mention only a few. Due the breadth of the feminist movement, I have explored only select instances of open space and dissent, and then only within a North American context. Sexuality was also a significant source of dissent within the second wave, and persists through the third wave with the exclusion of lesbians, transgendered folk, and women of other sexual orientations (Mitchell & Karaian, 2004). In addition, in discussing dissent from feminists of

colour and third world feminists, I risk further homogenising these women into monolithic categories. Aboriginal, African-Canadian, Arab-Canadian, Central and South American-Canadian, and Asian-Canadian women each experience their identity in different ways. While this paper paid particular attention to the dissent by women of colour in the second wave of feminism, the diversity of experience based on ethnicity deserves further study in relation to how they differently experience or identify with their gender and with feminism. Finally, although I have not discussed dissent by anti-feminists – because of their complete rejection of the feminist project, these “feminist dissenters” (Orr, 1997, p.34) should be further analyzed for the ways in which they have both negatively impacted the feminist movement as well as the ways in which they may have served hooks’ call for critique, analysis and exploration for the development of feminist theory.

Although dissent within the feminist movement has caused conflict and fractures, it has also allowed for - and indeed, encouraged - the expansion, growth and development of the feminist movement. This is exemplified in the emergence of anti-racist feminist thought and in the advent of third wave feminism, both of which strive to include women from diverse backgrounds and encourage women’s multiple identifications. The study of third wave feminism has also allowed for an expansion of our vocabulary of dissent, with third wavers using “textual communities” to resist through personal narrative (Mitchell & Karaian, 2004, p.64). The use of zines, hybrid publications, and anthologies have served as ‘open spaces’ that have allowed women to resist mainstream gender characterisations, share information, and build feminist movements.

The third wave has also built upon second wave strategies such as participation in civil disobedience, letter writing, street protests, culture jamming, direct action, public speaking, and education (ibid); and has also emphasised activism outside of state apparatuses and working within local communities to build awareness and to mobilise for change. The use of new conceptualisations of space in textual and online formats has allowed for new kinds of organising which may result in the incubation of new movements and ideas which should be followed closely. bell hooks’ notion of feminism as a theory in the making will be important to pay heed to as we observe the directions of the third wave and continue to critique, deconstruct, and analyze in hope of the formulation of new possibilities.

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