

The Rhetorical Shaping of Gender: Competing Images of Women

Knowledge Challenge:

- To what extent have women's movements in the United States fought for the rights of all women?
- Are all feminists pro-choice?
- To what extent do we live in a postfeminist era?

What are your dreams for the future? Do you imagine working with an NGO, playing professional sports, earning a graduate or professional degree, or running your own business? Do you intend to accumulate some property and savings? Do you plan to have children? Perhaps more immediately, have you taken out loans in your name? Do you have your own credit card? Whom do you plan to vote for in the next election? Have you ever considered running for office yourself?

Entertaining any one of the foregoing questions would have been impossible for a woman in the 1800s, and many of them would have been improbable for most women in the United States even in the 1950s. Until 1920, women could not vote, attend college, or pursue training for most professions. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, women found it extremely difficult to get loans or credit in their own names; they had no legal control over their reproductive health; they were routinely and *legally* discriminated against in the workplace; and they had no hope of winning athletic scholarships. Changes in the status and rights of women didn't just happen. They came about because ordinary people thought the status quo was wrong and took active roles in challenging and changing it.

This and the next chapter allow us to appreciate the profound ways that individuals and groups have transformed cultural views of gender and sex. We will explore rhetorical, or persuasive, efforts to challenge and change

existing attitudes, laws, and policies that affect how women and men are understood and how they are treated. In this chapter, we will consider women's movements that have advanced different images of women in the United States. In Chapter 4, we'll explore men's efforts to safeguard or change the images of men in the United States.

As we discuss these rhetorical movements, you'll discover that they are anything but uniform. They advocate diverse images of gender and pursue a range of goals, not all of which are compatible. Knowledge of varying activism about gender will enhance your understanding of the dynamism of U.S. culture and may allow you to clarify your own ideas about gender and how you personally express it. What you learn may also inspire you to become involved in issues related to gender within your community.

The Three Waves of Women's Movements in the United States

Many people think women's movements first emerged in the 1960s. This, however, disregards more than a century of intense activism about women. It also implies that there is a single women's movement, when actually there have been and are multiple women's movements.

Rhetorical movements to define women's nature and rights have occurred in three waves. During each wave, two distinct ideologies have informed movement goals and efforts for change. One ideology, **liberal feminism**, holds that women and men are alike and equal in most respects. Therefore, goes the reasoning, they should have equal rights, roles, and opportunities. A second, quite different ideology, **cultural feminism**, holds that women and men are fundamentally different and, therefore, should have different rights, roles, and opportunities. These two ideologies coexist, reflecting different images of women and their rights.

The wave metaphor for women's movements has limits (Hewitt, 2010). Movements don't necessarily fit neatly into generational compartments. Many themes that were in the first wave—reproductive rights, for example—were also in the second wave and are now part of the third wave. Likewise, some of the goals and tactics of third-wave feminists echo ones common in the second wave (Dow & Wood, 2014; Fixmer & Wood, 2005). As you read about three waves of women's movements, know that specific concerns and ideologies are not restricted to any single chronological point.

The First Wave of Women's Movements in the United States

From approximately 1840 to 1925, the first wave of women's movements included both liberal and cultural branches. Ironically, the conflicting views of these two movements worked together to change the status and rights of women in U.S. society.

Liberal Ideology: The Women's Rights Movement

The most well-known women's activism during the first wave endorsed a decisively liberal ideology. The **women's rights movement** came into being to gain basic civil rights for women. Scholars date the start of this movement as 1840, when Lucretia Coffin Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton met at an international antislavery convention and were both denied entry based on their sex (Campbell, 1989a). Mott and Stanton realized that they could not work to end slavery if they were denied political voice as women. Thus, they helped organize the first women's rights convention, the Seneca Falls Convention, held in New York in 1848. The keynote address, entitled "Declaration of Sentiments," was ingeniously modeled on the Declaration of Independence (Campbell, 1989b, p. 34). It began with these words:

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

The Declaration of Sentiments catalogued specific grievances women had suffered, including not being allowed to vote, exclusion from most forms of higher education, restrictions on employment, and loss of property rights upon marriage. At Seneca Falls, 32 men and 68 women signed a petition supporting women's rights. Instrumental to passage of the petition was the support of the former slave Frederick Douglass (Campbell, 1989b).

Douglass' support of women's rights does not signify widespread participation of blacks in the women's rights movement. Initially, there were strong links between abolitionist, or antislavery, efforts and women's rights (Beck, 2008). However, this alliance was strained when the U.S. Constitution was amended, in 1874, to extend suffrage to black men, but not to women. Additionally, many black women were disenchanted with the women's rights movement's focus on white women's circumstances and its lack of attention to grievous differences caused by race (Breines, 2006). Thus, the early women's rights movement became almost exclusively white in its membership and interests.

Women's rights activists marched and spoke at rallies and engaged in peaceful nonviolent protests and hunger strikes. They were jailed, mistreated, and violently force fed. Their struggles are dramatically chronicled in the HBO film *Iron Jawed Angels*. A long 72 years after the Seneca Falls Convention, women won the right to vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

A'n't I a Woman?

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

On May 28, 1851, Truth attended a women's rights meeting in Akron, Ohio. Throughout the morning, she listened to speeches that focused on white women's concerns. Moved to point out what was missing, Truth rose and gave her own speech, "A'n't I a Woman?," which pointed out the ways in which white women's oppression differed from that

of black women (Campbell, 2005). Truth had been owned by a Dutch master, so English was a second language for her, one in which she was not fully fluent. The following excerpt from the speech is based on Frances Dana Gage's transcription (Stanton, Anthony, & Gage, 1882, p. 116).

Dat man over dar say dat womin needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to hab de best place everywhar. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And a'n't I a woman? ... I have borne thirteen chilern and seen 'em mos' all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And a'n't I a woman?

TAKE A STAND: To what extent do you think Sojourner Truth's claim that white women's oppression differs from black women's oppression is still true today?

Cultural Ideology: The Cult of Domesticity

Although the Women's Rights Movement is often assumed to represent the interests of most white women in the 1800s, many women of the time did not believe that women and men were fundamentally alike and equal. Instead, they thought that women were suited to the domestic sphere because they were more moral, nurturing, concerned about others, and committed to harmony than men. Because they believed that women were suited to domesticity, these women belonged to what has been called the **cult of domesticity** (Welter, 1966).

Yet some women who were devoted to domestic life felt a need to represent those interests in public. They worked for abolition because slavery destroyed families, lobbied for temperance because alcohol contributed to violence against women and children (Fields, 2003; Million, 2003), and fought for labor laws to protect children. Their advocacy required a public voice, including the right to vote. Thus, for quite different reasons than those motivating women's rights activists, women in the cult of domesticity also worked for women's enfranchisement (Baker, 2006; Sarkela, Ross, & Lowe, 2003).

After passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, women's movements in the United States were relatively inactive due to several factors. First, public attention was directed at two world wars. While men were at war, women joined the labor force in record numbers to maintain the economy and support the war effort. Between 1940 and 1944, six million women went to work—a 500% increase in the number of women in paid labor (Harrison, 1988). Women's participation in

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Reproductive Rights

Birth control was and is a priority in many women's movements. In the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Cady Stanton insisted that "voluntary motherhood" was a prerequisite of women's freedom (Gordon, 1976; Schiff, 2006). Margaret Sanger's work as a nurse made her painfully aware that many women, particularly immigrants and poor women, died in childbirth or as a result of illegal abortions (Chesler, 1992). She insisted that a woman's body belongs to herself, not the church or government.

During the second wave of feminism in the United States, feminists again protested for safe, accessible birth control and abortion for all women. In 1973, the landmark case *Roe v. Wade* established abortion as a woman's right. Yet, abortion is still not available to all women in the United States.

Reproductive rights are also a focus of the third wave. The March for Women's Lives, held on April 25, 2004, on the Capitol Mall in Washington, DC, drew 1.15 million marchers to advocate for reproductive justice (Hayden, 2009). Voicing support for the right of all people

to control their own sexual and reproductive health, the marchers included young men and women, grandmothers, mothers with babies, and people of different ethnic identities, religions, genders, and sexual orientations.

Reproductive rights are central to feminist movements, but not all feminist movements are pro-choice. Groups such as Feminists for Life are firmly against abortion. They argue that choosing not to have a child is antithetical to feminine values.

There is a widespread assumption that birth control is liberatory for women. In reality, however, efforts to control reproduction have been liberatory only for some women, and they have been decisively disempowering for other women (Fixmer-Oraiz, 2013; Gordon, 2007; Solinger, 2005). For instance, throughout much of the twentieth century in the United States, many women who were black, immigrant, poor, lesbian, mentally challenged, incarcerated, or otherwise considered "undesirable" were sterilized without their consent.

TAKE A STAND: What does "reproductive justice" mean? How are reproductive rights connected to other issues of social justice, including environmental justice, a living wage, and access to health care and education?

paid labor was halted when soldiers came home. More than two million women employed during the wars were fired, and their positions were given to male veterans (Barnett & Rivers, 1996). With limited career options, the average woman in the 1940s married at 20 and had three children before turning 30. By the time she was 50, the children had left home (Collins, 2009b). The lack of opportunities beyond home and family sowed the seeds for the second wave of U.S. feminism.

The Second Wave of Women's Movements in the United States

Starting in 1963, a second wave of women's movements emerged in the United States. As in the first wave of U.S. women's movements, the second wave included liberal feminists and cultural feminists.

Liberal Ideology

The second wave of U.S. feminism included many groups that endorsed a liberal ideology. The first feminist activism to emerge during the second wave was **radical feminism**, also called the **women's liberation movement**. Not surprisingly, college campuses provided fertile ground for the emergence of radical feminism. It grew out of New Left politics that protested the Vietnam War and fought for civil rights. Women in the New Left movement did the same work as their male peers and risked the same hazards of arrest and physical assault, but men in the New Left treated women as subordinates, telling them to make coffee, type news releases, do the menial work of organizing, and be ever available for sex.

Women in several New Left groups challenged the sexism of their male peers, but most men in the movement ignored them (Stansell, 2010). Outraged by men's refusal to treat women in the movement as equals, many women withdrew from the New Left and formed their own organizations.

Radical feminists relied on "rap" or consciousness-raising groups, in which women gathered to talk informally about personal experiences with sexism and to link those personal experiences to larger social and political structures. Radical feminists' commitment to equality and their deep suspicion of hierarchy led them to insist on leaderless discussions so that participants would have equal power.

Radical feminists relied on revolutionary analysis and politics along with high-profile public events to call attention to the oppression of women and to demand changes (Barry, 1998; Freeman, 2002). Examples of public events they staged include:

- Occupation of the *Ladies' Home Journal* office.
- Speak-outs about silenced issues such as rape and abortion.
- Protests against the Miss America pageants in 1968 and 1969.
- Guerrilla theater to dramatize public issues.

JES

My grandmother was a radical feminist. I grew up hearing stories about how badly the guys treated her and other women who were working for civil rights. It's totally weird that the guys couldn't see women were their equals when they were all about blacks being equal and that's why they were in the Civil Rights movement. Grandma has told me about her rap groups and stuff like that. She says they changed her life.

Some women involved in radical movements of the 1960s formed organizations to represent concerns of women of color. For instance, the Third World Women's Alliance grew out of the civil rights movement in 1968 and focused on ending imperialism, sexism, and racism (Thompson, 2002). In another example, the first national Chicana conference was organized in 1971 and drew over 600 women. They advocated free and autonomous reproductive health care, 24-hour community childcare, and the "educational, political, social and economic advancement" of Chicanas (Vidal, 1971). Native women formed organizations such as Women

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

One of the most widespread misperceptions is that feminists burned bras in 1968 to protest the Miss America pageant. That never happened. Here's what did. In planning a response to the pageant, protesters considered a number of strategies to dramatize their disapproval of what the pageant stood for and how it portrayed women. They decided to protest by throwing false eyelashes, bras, and girdles into what they called the Freedom Trash Can.

They also put a crown on an animal labeled Miss America and led it around the pageant. In early planning for the protest, some members suggested burning bras, but this idea was abandoned (Collins, 2009a; Hanisch, 1970). However, a reporter heard of the plan and reported it as fact on national media. Millions of Americans accepted the report as accurate, and even today many people refer to feminists as "bra burners."

TAKE A STAND: How do you think the belief that feminists burned bras in 1968 has affected perceptions of feminists?

of All Red Nations (WARN) and Northwest Indian Women's Circle to confront involuntary sterilization, infant mortality, land tenure, and systemic racism in foster care and adoption (Langston, 2003). Similarly, Asian American feminists formed grassroots organizations that reflected gender, ethnic, and class concerns, including the Filipino American Women Network, the Organization of Chinese American Women, the Vietnamese Women's Association, and Asian American Women United (Chow, 1989).

An important outcome of the various strains of radical feminism was the identification of the structural basis of women's oppression. The connection between social practices and individual women's situations was captured in radical feminists' declaration that "the personal is political."

Another branch of second-wave feminism emerged from the U.S. suburbs in the early 1960s. Liberal feminism, which advocates women's social, economic, educational, and political equality, was ignited in 1963 with publication of *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. The book's title was Friedan's way of naming "the problem that has no name," naming the discontent that many white, middle-class American women felt because they had no opportunities beyond home and family. Friedan declared that this seemingly personal issue was actually also a political issue. She pointed out that women were not able to pursue personal development because of political or structural factors: American institutions, especially laws, kept many women confined to domestic roles. Although most suburban stay-at-home moms loved their families and homes, they also longed for an identity outside of home, particularly in the 30 to 50 years of life after children left home (Collins, 2009b). Liberal feminism is embodied in NOW, the National Organization for Women. Founded in 1966, NOW works to secure social, political, professional, and educational equality for women and has become one of the most influential public voices for women's rights.

Although second-wave liberal feminism was characterized by more focus on and leadership by white, middle-class women, it would be a mistake to buy the

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NOW was established in 1966. Betty Friedan and the Reverend Pauli Murray, an African-American woman who was an attorney and poet, coauthored NOW's original mission statement, which states: "The purpose of NOW is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men."

Among NOW's achievements:

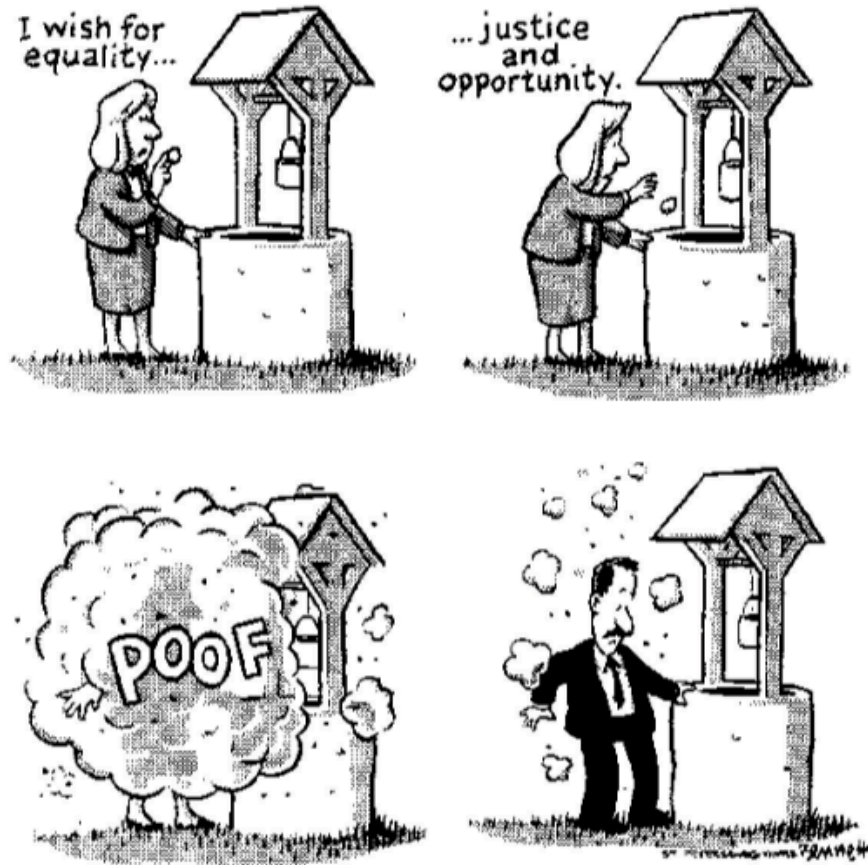
- Executive Order 11375, which prohibits sex discrimination by federal contractors.
- Amending the Civil Rights Act of 1965 to include sex, along with race, religion, and nationality, as an illegal basis for employment discrimination.
- Support of federally financed child-care centers to enable women to work outside the home.
- Documenting sexism in media.
- Identification of and publicity about sexism in children's books and programs.
- Reform of credit and banking practices that disadvantage women.
- Enlargement of women's opportunities to participate in sports.
- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's adoption of a rule that sex-segregated want ads are discriminatory.
- Support for women who seek elective and appointive public office.
- Highlighting gender inequities worldwide, particularly in poorer countries.

TAKE A STAND: To what extent do you agree with and support NOW's mission?

stereotype that second-wave liberal feminism was "lily white." As scholars (Dow, 2014; Lumsden, 2009; McDonald, 2012) of the second wave have pointed out, the truth is more nuanced. From the start, concerns about race and racism were negotiated alongside concerns about sex and sexism. Most liberal feminist as well as radical feminists fought for Civil Rights, and second-wave liberal feminism benefited from strong voices of nonwhite women, such as Flo Kennedy, Pauli Murray, Shirley Chisholm, and bell hooks (Gallagher, 2012). In 1970, Jamaican-American Aileen Hernandez became NOW's second president. Liberal feminism today is inclusive of diverse women and the issues in their lives.

Liberal feminism is not confined to the United States. Feminist groups around the world are committed to equal rights for women.

- Feminist NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) have contributed substantially to global awareness of particular forms of oppression of women, such as sex trafficking (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women).
- In 2013, thousands of women in over 50 cities across Turkey marched to promote state recognition of women's educational and reproductive rights and to end violence against women ("Global Short Takes").
- Record numbers of women participated in The World Social Forum in 2004 and 2005 and drew worldwide attention to the urgent and continuing issues of violence against women (Sen & Saini, 2005; Wilson, 2007).
- In Iraq, women today have fewer rights than before U.S. troops invaded the country. Women there have created The Organization of Women's Freedom in



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Iraq (OWFI: <http://www.equalityiniraq.com>) to fight for women's rights to education, employment, marital choice, and inheritance (McKee, 2006).

- After a long struggle for suffrage, Kuwaiti women gained the right to vote in 2006 (Fattah, 2006).
- In response to growing awareness of violence against women worldwide, the online International Feminist Network was launched in 2013 by feminists in 30 countries, creating a platform for global activism and demonstrating solidarity among women across borders (Chemaly, 2013).

CASS

I really like what NOW is about and how it works. It's not as cool as some of the radical groups, but it makes change happen by working within the system. NOW has changed laws and policies. It's given a national platform for fighting racism and women's self-hatred. It's gotten women elected to office. You can't have that kind of impact unless you get inside the system and figure out how to change it from the inside.

Although many liberal feminists of different races in the 1960s and 1970s grappled with issues of race, black feminism or **womanism** is explicitly dedicated to

foregrounding issues of race and class as they are related to gender. Highlighting how oppressions intersect, womanists work to shape a political movement specific to the concerns of black women. Womanists point out that, compared to white women, black women as a group are more often single, bear more children, are paid less, and assume more financial responsibility for families (Walker, 1992; Parks, 2010). In addition to focusing on race, womanists attend to ways in which class intersects race and sex to create inequality. Womanist organizations often include working-class women and address issues that keenly affect lower-class African-American women. Their goals include reforming social services to be more responsive to poor women, and increasing training and job opportunities so that women of color can improve the material conditions of their lives.

In 1997, African-American women held a **Million Woman March** in Philadelphia. Powered by grassroots volunteers who built support in their localities, the steering committee of the Million Woman March was made up not of celebrities but of average women who worked at unglamorous jobs and lived outside the spotlight. Perhaps the spirit of the Million Woman March is best summed up by Irma Jones, a 74-year-old woman who had marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from Selma to Montgomery. After the Million Woman March, Jones said, “I’m glad we did this before I died. People say black women can never get together. Today, we got together, sister” (Logwood, 1998, p. 19).

The second wave also gave rise to **multiracial feminism**—a liberation movement characterized by global perspective, coalition-building, and emphasis on multiple systems of domination that shape women’s lives (Anzaldúa, 2002; Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Collins, 1998; Ryan, 2004; Thompson, 2002). Drawing on the work of earlier radical women of color, as well as womanism’s focus on black women’s lives, multiracial feminists work to dismantle the various forms of oppression that impact women’s lives. Although race is especially important in multiracial feminism, race is understood to be intertwined with other systems of domination. Multiracial feminists insist that gender does not have universal meaning—instead, what gender means and how it affects our lives varies as a result of race, economic class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and so forth. While some feminist historians

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To Be Womanish, To Be a Womanist

Alice Walker is credited with coining the term *womanism* as a label for black women who believe in women’s rights and opportunities. According to Walker, Southern black women often said to their daughters, “You acting womanish,” which meant the daughters were being bold, courageous, and willful. To be

womanish is to demand to know more than others say is good for you—to stretch beyond what is prescribed for a woman or girl (Collins, 1998). In her 1983 book *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, Walker writes, “Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender” (p. xii).

TAKE A STAND: What do you think Walker meant when she said that “womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender”? What does the analogy tell you about womanism and feminism?

cite a decline in feminist activism in the early 1980s, the 80s and 90s were decades in which multiracial feminists flourished.

KATIE

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

Central to both womanism and multiracial feminism is emphasis on women's agency. Despite the constraints imposed by systems of domination, women of color have often resisted their oppressions. Even when they operated within abhorrent systems of domination such as slavery, women of color found ways to care for themselves and their families and to contribute to their communities (hooks, 1990; Walker, 1983). In recognizing that women of color have resisted oppression, multiracial feminists highlight the strengths of women.

A final strand in liberal feminism is **ecofeminism**. In both Europe and America, ecofeminists assert there is a connection between the effort to control and subordinate women and the struggle to dominate nature (perhaps not coincidentally called "Mother Earth"). Rosemary Radford Ruether (1974, 1983, 2001), a theological scholar, argues that the lust to dominate has brought the world to the brink of a moral and ecological crisis in which there can be no winners. Ecofeminists believe that, as long as oppression is culturally valued, it will be imposed on anyone and anything that is unable or unwilling to resist.

For ecofeminists, women's oppression is best understood as a specific example of an overarching cultural ideology that esteems oppression. Believing in humans' profound interdependence with all other life forms, ecofeminists argue that exploitation, domination, and aggression oppress women, men, children, animals, and the planet itself. While some early ecofeminist writings tended to essentialize women (and men), ecofeminism is increasingly intersectional. In *Sistah Vegan*, A. Breeze Harper (2010) says that all forms of oppression are linked and must be addressed through activism that connects feminism, decoloniality, environmental justice, and animal liberation.

STEPHANIE

Some of my strongest values involve ending the oppression of animals and living a sustainable lifestyle. Until I read about ecofeminism, I never saw the connection between those beliefs and feminism. But it makes sense, once you think about it, that if it's wrong to oppress animals and the earth, it's wrong to oppress women ... or anyone ... or anything.

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES Antifeminism

Women's rights were not achieved without dissent. Beginning with the first wave, there have been intense antifeminist efforts, also called the **backlash** against feminism (Superson & Cudd, 2002). **Antifeminism** opposes changes in women's roles, status, rights, or opportunities.

The first example of antifeminism was the **antisuffrage movement**, which aimed to refuse women the right to vote. Antisuffragists argued that women's rights to vote, pursue education, or hold property conflicted with women's natural roles as wives and mothers, and that women's suffrage would weaken the nation (Palczewski, 2005). Antisuffrage activism reached its apex between 1911 and 1916 and disbanded after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Antifeminist activism resurged in the 1970s when Marabel Morgan (1973) and Helen Andelin (1975) advocated women's return to traditional attitudes, values, and roles. A more prominent form of antifeminism was the STOP ERA movement, which was a direct response

to the 1972–1973 campaign to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The most vocal proponent of STOP ERA, Phyllis Schlafly, traveled around the nation announcing that feminism was destroying femininity by encouraging women to leave traditional roles. Ironically, although Schlafly argued that women's place was in the home, her speaking schedule kept her away from her own home and family. The STOP ERA movement was successful in blocking passage of the bill. To this day, the United States has not passed the ERA.

Antifeminism also exists in the twenty-first century. The 2001 book *The Surrendered Wife: A Practical Guide for Finding Intimacy, Passion, and Peace with a Man* (L. Doyle) counsels women to abandon the quest for equality if they want happy marriages (Clinton, 2001). Another book, *The War against Men* (Hise, 2004), claims that women have gained power at the expense of men and that this is contrary to God's commandments.

TAKE A STAND: Do you see evidence of antifeminism in your community?

Cultural Ideology

Just as in the first wave, the second wave also includes groups that believe that women and men are different in important ways and, thus, should have different rights and roles.

Separatism was developed to provide communities for women to live independently of men. Separatists believe that women are fundamentally different from men in the value they place on life, equality, harmony, nurturance, and peace. Finding that these values gain little hearing in a patriarchal, capitalist society, separatists form all-women communities in which feminine values can flourish without the aggressive, individualistic, oppressive values these women associate with Western masculinity.

Because separatists do not assume a public voice to critique the values they find objectionable, they exercise little political influence. Yet, their very existence defines an alternative vision of how we might live—one that speaks of harmony, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence of all life forms.

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The Text of the Equal Rights Amendment

Equality of the rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the

United States or by any State on account of sex.

TAKE A STAND: Should the United States pass the Equal Rights Amendment? Why or why not?

REGINA

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

Revalorism highlights women's traditional activities and contributions to society. The broad goal of revalorists is to increase the value that society places on women and their traditional roles.

MADELINE

It saddens me that so few young women knit or crochet or even sew. Nearly all women of my generation knew how to sew, and many of us knew how to knit or weave or quilt. Historically, women have made beautiful clothing and linens for their families—the kind you can't buy in a store. Women today seem so focused on career that they are cutting off their links to their own histories. Does it have to be either or?

Drawing on standpoint theory, which we discussed in Chapter 2, revalorists believe that women's traditional involvement in homemaking and caregiving makes most women more nurturing, supportive, and cooperative than most men. Sara Ruddick (1989), for instance, claims that the process of mothering young children cultivates "maternal thinking," which is marked by attentiveness to others and their needs. In documenting women's contributions, revalorists aim to render a more complete history of the United States and its people.

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer-Identified Women

Women of different sexual orientations and gender expressions and identities have been active in feminist movements since their inception. In the first wave, a number of feminists including Susan B. Anthony, Frances Willard, and Alice Stone Blackwell were in “Boston marriages”—committed, long-term, intimate relationships with other women. According to historian Lillian Faderman (1999), the disproportionate number of lesbians in first wave women’s rights struggles is because of two significant factors. First, women who did not rely on men for protection were particularly vulnerable to the many gendered inequities of that era, including the inability to vote and to pursue education and most careers. Thus, obtaining political rights was critical to survival for these women. Second, women who refused intimate relationships with men were not constrained by marriage and child-rearing and therefore had more time to commit to the women’s rights movement.

Similarly in the second wave, many lesbian, bisexual, trans, and queer-identified women were involved with women’s rights, civil rights, and gay liberation movements—for example, trans women led significant protests like the 1969 Stonewall rebellion. But issues specific to their experiences were not always included in the political agendas of other movements, and some faced open hostility from straight, cisgendered feminists and/or gay men. As a result, some LGBTQ women decided to dedicate their feminist activism to lesbian, queer, trans, and/or issues, forming organizations such as the Radicalesbians, the Furies Collective, and organizations committed to working at the intersections of sexuality, race, class, and gender such as the Combahee River Collective and the Street Transgender Action Revolutionaries. This intersectional work continues to inspire contemporary feminism in organizations like SONG: Southerners On New Ground and SPARK Reproductive Justice Now.

TAKE A STAND: How do you imagine feminist activism might be different if LGBTQ issues had been included in feminist political agendas from the start?

LYLE

I’m a lot older than most students. I’ve had a career, and my wife and I raised four kids. I should say she raised them because that was her job. Mine was to earn an income for the family. That system worked fine for us, and our kids turned out just fine. I don’t understand why so many young people don’t want to follow traditional roles. We approve of division of labor in business and government; what’s wrong with division of labor (he makes the money, she takes care of family) in our personal lives?

Contemporary Feminism

Many branches of second-wave feminism continue to be active today. Alongside them, a new generation of feminist activism emerged in the late 1980s. Sometimes

referred to as the third-wave, younger feminists are distinct from earlier generations because they are the beneficiaries of the second wave. They inherit a world partially transformed by the gains of the twentieth century; these gains include laws barring sexual harassment and discrimination as well as increased professional and educational opportunities for women. These structural conditions shape contemporary feminist movements in distinct ways. As was the case with previous waves of feminism, as the third wave has evolved, it has become less monolithic. Different branches have emerged and additional ones are likely to appear in the years ahead.

Riot Grrrl

Riot Grrrl was an underground feminist movement that began in the late 1980s and was aligned with punk music, radical politics, and Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethics (Marcus, 2010). Angered to find that the lessons of second-wave struggles had not been fully absorbed by U.S. culture, Riot Grrrls formed feminist collectives across the country. They created and self-published their own music, art, and magazines (“zines”) in order to tell women’s stories and build a “Revolution, Girl Style Now.” Zines such as *Girl Germs*, *Jigsaw*, and *Bamboo Girl* tackled a range of feminist issues, from rape culture and eating disorders to homophobia and racism (Alcatara-Tan, 2000). Riot Grrrl bands like *Bikini Kill* and *Bratmobile* wrote songs to rage against sexism and celebrate grrrls’ independence and sexuality. Consider the lyrics from the song “Rebel Girl,” commonly celebrated as a Riot Grrrl anthem: “That girl thinks she’s the queen of the neighborhood/She’s got the hottest trike in town/That girl, she holds her head up so high/I think I wanna be her best friend/Rebel girl, rebel girl/Rebel girl you are the queen of my world” (Hanna, 1991).

Many scholars consider Riot Grrrl to signal the beginning of third-wave feminism as a whole. It was certainly the first visible movement to emerge from a new generation committed to continuing feminism, albeit with its own commitments and politics. Before we turn to other branches of the third wave, however, we must examine another, and very different, movement emerging around the same time.

Power Feminism

Power feminism emerged in the early 90s. Power feminists assume that society does not oppress women because women have the power to control what happens to them. Naomi Wolf (1993) tells women that the only thing holding them back from equality is their own belief that they are victims. Similarly, power feminist Katie Roiphe (1993) claimed that Take Back the Night marches, annual nonviolent protests to speak out against rape, are self-defeating because “proclaiming victimhood” does not project strength.

FOLANA

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

Power feminism ignores the difference between being a victim in a particular moment, on the one hand, and adopting victim as an identity, on the other hand. Power feminism may appeal to women who are financially comfortable, successful, well educated, and living in safe neighborhoods. It is less persuasive to women who do not enjoy those privileges. Perhaps that is why power feminism is embraced mainly by white, heterosexual, middle- and upper-class cis-women who have little or no personal experience with discrimination and violence.

Mainstream Third-Wave Feminism

Emerging from Riot Grrrl and influenced by multiple branches of second-wave feminism, especially radical and multiracial feminism, **mainstream third-wave feminism** includes women of different ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, classes, appearances, sexual orientations, and gender identities. Although third wavers draw on earlier movements, third-wave feminism is not simply an extension of the second wave (Fixmer, 2003; Fixmer & Wood, 2005; Johnson, 2007). We'll discuss features that characterize third-wave feminism in its first two decades.

First, third-wave feminism is focused on intersectionality. Drawing on the insights of multiracial feminists, third-wave feminists recognize that women differ in ways that significantly shape their experiences and opportunities. They focus on the intersectionality of oppression, pointing out that race, class, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity are intricately woven together and must be addressed holistically. They work to speak about and for women as a group while simultaneously recognizing differences among women (Fixmer, 2003; Zack, 2005). Eve Ensler's latest book, *I Am an Emotional Creature* (2011), includes monologues from girls all over the world, showing both how they are different and how they have commonalities.

Second, because third-wave feminists recognize the intersectionality of oppression, they are committed to building alliances with other groups that work against various kinds of oppression. As third-wave writer, Mocha Jean Herrup (1995) explains, "to fight AIDS we must fight homophobia, and to fight homophobia we must fight racism, and so on.... Oppression is interrelated" (p. 247).

KATY

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

Another feature of third-wave feminism is everyday resistance. Third-wave feminists point out that many of the reforms won by the second wave have not been woven into everyday life. Sexism is often more subtle today than in 1960 or 1980, but it still exists; in fact, its subtlety is what makes it so challenging (Bennett, Ellison, & Ball, 2010). This motivates third wavers to embrace grassroots organizing and to challenge racist comments in the workplace and on the street, confront homophobic attitudes, and be willing to reject class privileges. Third-wavers Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards (2000) declare that, for third-wave feminists, “our politics emerge from our everyday lives” (p. 18). Personal acts in local contexts are seen as a key way to instigate change (Bodey & Wood, 2009; Fixmer & Wood, 2005; Sheridan-Rabideau, 2009).

Third-wave feminists insist that their politics must be rooted in personal, bodily resistance to oppressive ideologies (Babel & Kwan, 2011). In a stunning essay that explicitly links social constructions of female beauty to eating disorders that jeopardize millions of women's health, Abra Fortune Chernik (1995) writes, “Gazing in the mirror at my emaciated body, I observed a woman held up by her culture as the physical ideal because she was starving, self-obsessed and powerless, a woman called beautiful because she threatened no one except herself” (p. 81). After recognizing the connection between cultural codes for femininity and her own body, Chernik responded in a way that was both personal and political: “Gaining weight and getting my head out of the toilet bowl was the most political act I have ever committed” (p. 81).

Third-wave feminism is also media savvy and media engaged. Third-wave feminists, like other members of their generation, tend to be digitally networked so that they gain information from numerous sources and also create media of their own (Harris, 2004; Kearney, 2006; Johnson, 2007). Third-wave feminists are likely to learn immediately of new developments from blogs and social media, and often post their own videos of rallies and other events on YouTube and other websites. They also organize online as was the case when The Komen Foundation, which fights against breast cancer, announced it would no longer provide support to Planned Parenthood. Using social media, feminists got the word out, fueled outrage toward Komen's announced action, and forced Komen to reverse its position and continue funding Planned Parenthood.

Some, but not all, women who identify as third-wave feminists embrace consumption, individualism, and traditional “girl culture” by placing a premium on being pretty, feminine, sexy, and fashionable. Critics point out that while being sexy and being feminist aren’t mutually exclusive, embodying society’s ideal of womanhood is not equally possible for all women. Beauty ideals tend to privilege youth and whiteness, and demand a lot of energy and money. Thus, feminists who have sufficient time and money can embrace consumerism—spending money to be seen at the “right” restaurants, bars, spas, and stores and to acquire designer clothes, name-brand products, and cosmetic procedures (Chaudhry, 2005; Levy, 2005).

The focus on individualism can be similarly exclusive. For example, many women in our classes believe that if they do well in school and work hard, they will succeed in any career they choose. Yet, we worry that they may confront obstacles such as lower pay than male peers and discrimination against mothers (Hayden & O’Brien Hallstein, 2010). Obstacles such as these cannot be overcome by individual effort. They require structural change, and structural change grows out of collective political action. It remains to be seen whether more third-wave feminists will move beyond individual expression to public action (Henry, 2004).

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

“Don’t Tell Us How to Dress. Tell Men Not to Rape.”

In January 2011, Toronto Police constable Michael Sanguinetti spoke about crime prevention to a group of women at York University. He advised them to “avoid dressing like sluts” if they wished to prevent sexual assault (Stampler, 2011). Some women who heard Sanguinetti’s comment were angry about what they perceived as yet another instance of blaming victims and excusing perpetrators of sexual violence. Two women who took offense decided to take their grievance to the streets by organizing the first SlutWalk protest, which took place on April 3, 2011, at Queen’s Park in Toronto.

Although the organizers asked participants to dress in their everyday clothing to symbolize the fact that women in ordinary dress are assaulted, some participants chose to wear lingerie, stilettos, and other provocative clothing to symbolize their right to dress “like sluts” without being becoming victims of

sexual violence. Some of the marchers scrawled messages on their bodies or carried signs reading “My dress is not a yes” and “Don’t tell us how to dress. Tell men not to rape” (Valenti, 2011). Since the movement’s inception, Slutwalk protests have emerged organically in over 200 countries as well as in cities across the United States (Slutwalk Toronto).

Opinions of SlutWalks vary widely (see Dow & Wood, 2014). One social critic cheers, “Here at last is that bold, original, do-it-yourself protest movement we’ve been waiting for, a rock-hard wall of female solidarity ... presented as media-savvy street theater that connects the personal and the political” (Pollitt, 2011). Yet another social critic sees SlutWalks as “narcissistic stunts,” that are a “frivolous distraction by those who take advantage of the unprecedented freedoms won by others as they wrap themselves in the mantle of victim” (Phillips, 2011).

TAKE A STAND: Go online to learn more about SlutWalks. After doing so, what do you think of these protests? Are they effective grassroots feminist organizing? Are they proof that women themselves have bought into sexist objectification of women? Are they something else?

Hip-Hop Feminism

In the late 1990s, another branch of younger feminist activism announced itself (Morgan, 1999). **Hip-hop feminism** is a movement rooted in black feminism, and responsive to the concerns of the post-civil rights or hip-hop generation. Not unlike other branches of third-wave, hip-hop feminists “recognize culture as a pivotal site for political intervention to challenge, resist, and mobilize collectives to dismantle systems of exploitation” (Durham, Cooper, & Morris, 2013).

Hip-hop feminism is, however, distinct from other branches of third-wave feminism in significant ways. It is centered on the needs and experiences of younger black women and draws explicitly on the justice-oriented politics of hip-hop and rap, which began as a form of protest and rebellion within impoverished black communities. According to hip-hop feminist scholars, “hip-hop feminism is concerned with the ways the conservative backlash of the 1980s and 1990s, deindustrialization, the slashing of the welfare state, and the attendant gutting of social programs and affirmative action, along with the increasing racial wealth gap, have affected the lifeworlds and worldviews of the hip-hop generation” (Durham et al., 2013). In the decades following the height of the civil rights movement, the hip-hop generation of black youth found themselves in a difficult bind—some forms of racist discrimination had been prohibited through law, but systemic racism persisted. Black culture was popularized in music and film, but black communities were disproportionately subject to police brutality, incarceration, and institutionalized poverty. Thus, hip-hop feminists emerged from a community of hip-hop artists committed to taking on these and other issues.

Of course, not all hip-hop and rap music is feminist. As hip-hop became popular, some artists abandoned the genre’s social justice roots. Mainstream, male-dominated hip-hop and rap has been critiqued for its misogyny and glorification of violence (Collins, 2007; Ofori-Atta, 2011).

TIFFANY

It makes black guys angry when I say it, but I think gangsta rap is totally sexist and destructive. Some of my girlfriends say they like rap and don’t take the anti-woman lyrics personally. The way I see it, though, calling women bitches and whores is as hateful as you can get. It totally disses women. If black men talk that way about black women, how can we respect ourselves or expect others to?

But hip-hop feminists are meeting the challenge head-on. “I love hip-hop, but it upsets me that young boys treat girls like objects. I feel like I don’t have a voice,” said 17-year-old Tempestt Young (Dawson, 2005, p. 18). So she became a key organizer for the 2005 Feminism and Hip-Hop Conference, which was attended by more than 2,000 people, including music industry professionals. Young is just one of many activists building a strong and vibrant community of hip-hop feminists—a movement that includes men and women, artists and activists, writers and scholars, and has long advocated for gender and racial justice (Durham et al., 2013; Pough, Richardson, Raimist, & Durham, 2007).

EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

A Postfeminist Era?

I'll be a postfeminist in the postpatriarchy.

Perhaps you have seen the above statement on a bumper sticker, or heard the term *postfeminism* used to describe our era (Dubriwny, 2013; McRobbie, 2009). To claim that ours is a **postfeminist era** in which feminism is no longer relevant or needed is to assume that sexism has been fully eradicated. Postfeminism adopts the language of feminism—using words such as “choice” and “empowerment”—to advance an individualistic agenda that undermines feminist commitments to collective justice and change. Postfeminism’s emphasis on individual choice confuses personal decision-making with freedom and gender equality (Ferguson, 2010). Consider the way pursuing an education is often thought of as a “choice” that one might freely pursue. This is, in part, accurate. But important factors are missing in this characterization—for example, how the decision to attend a university or college is often determined by finances. Full merit scholarships are hard to come by, and financial aid is difficult to secure if you or your parent(s) do not have credit. If you are a parent, the decision to pursue education is made more complex by childcare options, or lack thereof. And of course class status often determines the quality of your

K–12 education, and thus whether you will be a competitive applicant. Placing emphasis on personal choices above all else, postfeminism depoliticizes women’s lives and struggles—reducing structural conditions such as lack of societal support for childcare and unequal pay for women and men to individual challenges. Postfeminism tells individual women that they are personally responsible for finding ways to make their lives work without complaining about ongoing structural injustices.

Despite the popular press buzz about postfeminism, many thoughtful people see continuing relevance for feminism, even as it continues to evolve to meet new conditions and challenges. For example, Gloria Steinem says this about twenty-first-century feminism: “It looks like you. It looks like each self-respecting woman in the twenty-first century. It’s not for me to define; the message of feminism is that each of us, as female human beings, define ourselves. There are some generalities that you can see. It’s much more international, I’m happy to say. I think clearly most of the country now understands that women can do what men can do; the problem is that they don’t understand that men can do what women can do, which as I was saying, is the reason why women still suffer from having two jobs” (*Seattle Times*, 2009).

TAKE A STAND: What kinds of labor are still mostly performed by women? What would it look like for men to do what women have always done?

Hip-hop feminism is also expressed in music. It is embodied in the work of artists like Queen Latifah and Lauryn Hill, and more recently, Beyoncé, Janelle Monáe, Nicki Minaj, and Erykah Badu, who challenge gender norms and misogyny in their lyrics and performance. As Marcyliena Morgan, renowned hip-hop scholar and Director of the Hip-Hop Archive at Harvard University, notes: “Hip-hop feminists have been consistent in championing women’s rights, which encompasses everything from sexuality to abuse.... And that has always been irrespective of what men in hip-hop were doing” (quoted in Ofori-Atta, 2011).

Like earlier waves of feminism, the contemporary wave is dynamic and continually evolving. Some of the current branches will become stronger, some will wane, and new branches will emerge in the years to come.

SUMMARY

This chapter demonstrates that there are competing images of women that circulate in society. Through activist efforts, people argue for the images they think are most true, right, fair, or useful. And others argue back in an ongoing dialogue about who women are and what that means for their rights, roles, and opportunities.

The issue of whether a person is a feminist is considerably more complicated than it first appears. The “women’s movement” is really a collage of many movements that span more than 170 years and include a range of political and social ideologies. Whether or not you define yourself as a feminist, you have some views about women’s identities, rights, and nature. Much of the analysis in various women’s movements should inform your thinking about women’s roles and lives.

KEY TERMS

The following terms are defined in this chapter on the pages indicated, as well as in alphabetical order in the book’s glossary, which begins on page 281. The text’s companion website also provides interactive flash cards to help you learn these terms and the concepts they represent. You can access the site at www.cengagebrain.com.

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Separatism 68

womanism 65

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women’s rights movement 59

GENDER ONLINE

1. Visit the Lesbian Herstory Archives online. What kinds of materials are included in the collection? What do they tell us about lesbian lives? How do you perceive their connection to feminist history?
2. Visit NOW at: <http://www.now.org>



3. To learn more about the third wave and differences and commonalities between it and earlier waves, visit this website:
<http://www.thirdwavefoundation.org/>
4. Online search terms: “ecofeminism,” “A. Breeze Harper,” “postfeminism,” “third-wave feminism.”

REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, AND ACTION

1. How have your views of feminism changed as a result of reading this chapter?
2. With which of the women’s movements discussed in this chapter do you most identify? To what extent do you think we should work to ensure that women have equal rights and opportunities within existing systems (liberal feminism) or should work to change the systems to incorporate traditionally feminine values and concerns (cultural feminism)? Compose a statement that outlines your vision for the future of women’s movements.
3. Write or act out a discussion about whether women should serve in combat roles, which takes place between three feminists: an ecofeminist, a power feminist, and a separatist.
4. To what extent do you think it is possible for women to be both politically engaged feminists and sexy and conventionally feminine?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. Michael Kaufman & Michael Kimmell. (2011). *The Guy’s Guide to Feminism*. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press. In this short, very accessible book, Kaufman and Kimmel explain why, in their own words, “in spite of all the garbage jokes and media stereotypes, feminism is also an amazing gift to us guys” (p. 9).
2. *Iron Jawed Angels*. (2004). Directed by Katja von Garnier. Distributed by HBO. This film dramatizes the final stage of the fight for women’s right to vote.
3. *The Punk Singer*. (2013). Directed by Sini Anderson. Distributed by Sundance Selects. This film documents the Riot Grrrl movement through the life and activism of Kathleen Hanna, lead singer for Riot Grrrl bands Bikini Kill, Le Tigre, and the Julie Ruin.
4. Sue Monk Kidd. (2014). *The Invention of Wings*. New York: Viking. This novel provides a rich narrative account of women’s struggles in the nineteenth century through the lives of Sarah Grimke and her handmaid, Hetty “Handful” Grimke. Sarah struggles to step out of the roles prescribed for women of her era and Handful struggles against constraints of slavery.
5. Gail Collins. (2009). *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present*. New York: Little, Brown & Co. This is one of the most comprehensive and readable histories of the second wave of American feminism. Trained as a journalist, Collins writes in an engaging, accessible style.