

From liberal to intersectional: reframing feminism advocacy

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Abstract. Feminism has undergone four waves, each with different frames and genres that reflect the historical and cultural contexts. The first wave emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when women demanded reproductive rights and political equality. The second wave emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, when women challenged gender roles and social norms. The third wave emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, when women embraced intersectionality and diversity, recognizing the multiple oppressions faced by women of color, sexual minority groups, immigrants, etc. The fourth wave emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, when women used the internet and online culture to critique and celebrate feminism, creating new forms of expression and activism. This paper will examine how each wave's framing changed over time, what factors influenced these changes, and what limitations or challenges these waves faced. The paper will use documentation, web ethnography, and open coding methods to collect and analyze data.

1 Introduction

Feminist movement is originated from political revolution and evolved into social transformation. It is essentially a form of egalitarianism, which advocates that no one should be treated differently, be subjected to unreasonable expectations, or discriminated against because of one's gender, and that feminists, as women themselves, should promote gender equality from a female perspective.

Feminism has experienced four waves, and each wave has reflected and progressed from the previous wave and had different reasons for its emergence, which is why they have exhibited very different framing. The first wave of feminism, which spanned from 1848 to 1920, was a period of protest centered on political reform and the expansion of women's rights. 1848 marked the inception of the feminist movement with the publication of the Declaration of Sentiments, which declared the equality of men and women, at the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Specifically, according to the leaders of this wave such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Susan Anthony, and others, the main goal of this wave was to secure women's suffrage and property rights [1]. This is why, enabling women to gain political participation and economic independence as well was the central idea of this wave. As can be expected, the protests, speeches and written works of this wave were framed in a style that was formal, firm, challenging and rational. Thanks to the relentless efforts of the first-wave feminists, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920, and women's federal suffrage was formally granted to all women [1].

The second wave of feminism emerged in 1963, when Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, a

revelation of the oppression and discontent of American housewives [2]. This wave differed from the first wave in that, besides continuing to broaden women's roles in society, feminists, led by Betty Friedan, Simone de Beauvoir, Gloria Steinem, and others, began to challenge the societal expectations and social structures for both sexes and sought to eradicate sexism [3]. Thus, the central idea of this wave became evident in the attainment of sexual liberation and wider career development for women. The style of framing used in widespread public speeches, books, and advocacy campaigns was critical and radical. The second wave came to a close in 1973 when *Roe v. Wade* was decided and the Supreme Court recognized the legalization of abortion, which has safeguarded women's right to reproductive freedom ever since [3].

The third wave of feminism emerged in the 1990s, shortly after the conclusion of the second wave. In 1991, during Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court, Anita Hill filed sexual harassment charges against him, which some scholars regard as the onset of the third wave [4]. However, this paper contends that the third wave arose primarily due to the social critique of the "racial exclusion" of the second wave. In this wave, the crucial concept of "intersectionality" was introduced. In the thoughts and ideas of people such as Judith Butler and Audre Lorde, the diversity and inclusivity of feminism became the paramount theme and women of any race, country, background, family or position should have the right to equality [4]. Therefore, the framing of this wave is based on individualization and against gender essentialism. The framing style, on the other hand, is emotionally oriented, free, interactive and pluralistic [5].

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The fourth wave of feminism emerged in 2012 and continues to this day, amid the legal, political and social achievements of women in various domains. However, some challenges remain, such as the persistence of gender stereotypes and discrimination in some workplaces and industries, such as the beauty industry, where female employees are often required to wear makeup and high heels, while male employees are not. Moreover, the prevalence of sexual harassment and violence against women in various contexts, such as the #MeToo movement that started by Tarana Burke in 2006, has sparked a renewed debate about the need for feminism in the current social climate [2]. These issues raise the question of whether feminism is still relevant and necessary in the face of the rapid development of social media tools and intersectional analysis that can empower women and challenge the status quo. To answer this question, it is important to examine the changes in the framing of the feminist waves, which reflect the causes, goals and history of the feminist movement. By analyzing these elements, one can identify the strengths and weaknesses of framing and then combine them with the current challenges to devise a framing that is more suitable for the present time.

When Benford and Snow assessed the framing process in social movements, they regarded "framing" as an ongoing, dynamic process rather than a rigid and static skill [4]. They examined framing from various perspectives, and the author will review and comment on the following aspects relevant to this paper: two contexts that enable framing, four factors that cause framing change, and three core tasks of framing.

"Political opportunity structures" and "Cultural opportunities and constraints" are the two types of causes mentioned by Snow and Benford [4]. "Political opportunity structures" refers to the impact of structural changes in political organizations and policies on framing. "Cultural opportunities and constraints" refer to pre-existing traditions, myths, customs, and fashionable language in the cultural background of the person constructing the framing that affect the effectiveness of the framing [4].

In the framing of the feminist waves discussed in this paper, this paper argues that the emergence and change of various framings are not caused by either one of the two reasons alone, but most of the time they coexist with one having a greater impact, which will be explained in detail later.

"Issue Identification/Attribution Trajectories" "Flexibility and Inclusion" "Explaining Changes in Scope and Impact" and "Resonance", these four influencing factors are particularly prominent in the feminist waves, because each feminist wave is constantly reflecting on society and women themselves, redefining the problems they face, expanding the audience of the movement, making flexible adjustments to the form and direction of the movement, and resonating with more and more groups, and all these results in framing changes [5].

Snow and Benford defined "diagnostic framing" (recognizing and attributing sources of difficulties), "prognostic framing" (Specific strategies to resolve

social problems or grievances), and "motivational framing" (For taking part in enhanced collective action offers a rousing call or reason) [4].

The above three terms are very academic definitions, which are generalizations of some patterns. However, this paper does not think that they are suitable for directly describing the types of framing or the specific situations in the events, so in the following text, the author will use words like "protest-like framing" and "advocacy" to describe and give timely definitions of these words.

2 Reframing feminism: literature review

In reading the previous literature, it was found that analyzing the changes in feminist frames is rendered complex and subtle by the wide range of participants involved, the progression of the movement's aims and techniques over time, and the interpretation of feminism by the social context in which it is situated.

In the Harvard Political Review, feminism is defined as "a set of ideologies and theories aimed at realizing equal social, political, and economic rights for women" [6]. Essentially, feminism is egalitarianism, which promotes gender equality from a female perspective because feminists are women.

Journalist Amanda Barroso began her analysis of the changing framework of feminism by looking at the different stages of the feminist movement, distinguishing each wave based on its goals, historical context, and challenges [7]. While these perspectives are certainly valid, Barroso is analyzing the framing changes of the feminist movement from a journalist's point of view and is missing some of the academic perspectives, such as the cultural and political shifts mentioned earlier.

According to scholar Arinder's analysis, the main goal of the first wave of feminism, which emerged at the end of the 19th century, was to secure legal rights for women such as the right to vote, the right to property, and the right to earn education. The framing of that time was based on legal and political equality and freedom. The main forms of the movement were protests and petitions, accompanied by publications and speeches, such as Emmeline Pankhurst's "Freedom or Death" speech in Hartford, Connecticut in 1909, in which she criticized the radical tactics of the British women's suffrage advocates [7]. In her speech, she defended the radical tactics of British women's suffrage theorists, and framing at this time was a sharp, critical protest. The cultural as well as political context of this wave will be analyzed and added to later in this paper, and it is argued that the first wave of framing was not only based on legal equality.

The second wave of feminism, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, took a broader view and began to pay attention to the meaning of "gender" itself, that is, reproductive rights, domestic violence, discrimination in the workplace and so on [8, 9]. This wave is a period in which many female philosophers and writers, such as Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millett, published books like "the second sex" and "Sexual Politics". At this time,

the feminist framework was more diverse and radical, more like advocacy, as it challenged the patriarchal structures and norms that oppressed women in all areas of life, and many different strands of feminism developed, such as Marxist feminism, which linked women's oppression to class exploitation, or radical feminism, which viewed patriarchy as the root cause of all social problems. Unlike the scholar Arinder, this paper argues that the framing of the Second Wave was not more radical in form, but rather more profound and subdued without losing its defiance, which will be discussed later [8].

The third wave of feminism began in the 1980s, it placed a greater emphasis on diversity and individuality, as the second wave was criticized for only fighting for the rights of white women in most of the time. In this wave, feminists recognized and decided to start taking advantage of the differences and similarities between women based on their identities, experiences, and preferences. As a result, the framework became more pluralistic, flexible and emotionally oriented. At the same time, different branches of feminist framings became differentiated, such as postmodern feminism, which is using advocacy to question universal and essentialist conceptions of femininity, and queer feminism, which was using emotionally oriented initiatives to question binary categorizations of sexuality. The views of this paper on this wave are basically the same as previous studies, but still some details and analysis of speeches and books published at the time will be added.

The fourth wave of feminism began in the twenty-first century and continues to this day. Against the backdrop of emerging issues such as globalization, social media, and online harassment, the feminist framework has followed suit in order to adapt to the new political and cultural environment. The #metoo movement, launched online by Harvey Wayans in October 2017, encourages women to open up about their experiences of being assaulted on Twitter, which is representative of this wave's framing, emotionally oriented advocacy [9]. This paper argues that the framing of feminism nowadays does not have a very clear emotional orientation but tends to present facts as well as events of gender inequality so that people can make their own judgments, but such a model also creates difficulties for the promotion of feminism, which will be discussed later in the paper.

3 Feminist waves framing transitions

This paper divides the analysis into the following four sections for subsequent analysis based on the four waves of feminism, its historical context, and the shifts in its framing.

3.1 First wave: liberal feminism protest

What is not often mentioned about the framing of the first wave of feminism in previous studies is its historical

context regarding the birth control pill. In addition to being inspired by liberty, affirmative action, and abolition, women's control over contraceptives has been a controversial and inspiring factor in the feminist movement [3].

The first FDA-approved oral contraceptive was developed by two pro-feminist activists, Margaret Sanger and Katherine McCormick, who believed that women's control over contraception was a necessary prerequisite for women's liberation [5]. The oral contraceptive pill gave women the ability to control their own fertility, so that they could refuse to get pregnant and pursue other lives, education, and so on, to which they aspired.

This is why part of the framing at that time was based on the control of contraceptives. For example, a typical framing based on the contraceptives: "The birth control pill is another example of male control over women's bodies and reproductive choices, give women back the right to use the contraceptives!" These framing was also in the form of protest [9]. Margaret Sanger has been arrested several times for passing on contraceptive information as well as the pill, which is recognized by the Comstock Act as disseminating obscene material. She has also spoken in New York City on "The Morality of Birth Control," arguing that birth control gives opportunities to women who wish to improve their health, well-being and social situation [3]. These are clearly protest-like framings based on oral contraceptives that are persuasive, radical and controversial.

Unlike the scholar Arinder has argued before, this is not a framing based on legal or political rights. Also, the framing based on the pill also received a lot of debate and opposition, with opponents claiming that the safety and side effects of the pill could jeopardize women's health, which indirectly inspired the framing of the second wave of feminism about reproductive freedom and fertility discrimination.

3.2 Second wave: radical feminism advocacy and protest

The second wave of feminism challenged the toxic societal expectations of gender and patriarchal structures and norms that oppressed women and men. In 1968, feminists threw some "feminine objects" into the "trash can of liberty" as a way of countering the social expectation that women be called "good ladies" and denouncing a single standard of beauty under male gaze; in 1970, thousands of women organized the Strike for Equality in New York City [6]. These indeed show that the second wave of feminism was still characterized by radicalism and retained the framing of protest.

More noteworthy, however, is the rise of feminist philosophy and the framing based on this during this period. This paper even prefers to call the second wave "the beginning of feminist philosophy", a period in which a wide range of philosophies were developed. And the essence of all the ideas and branches produced during this period can be summarized in the fact that "gender" is not only a biological definition, but also a

social definition of two different roles and persons. In addition to The Haight Report, published in 1976, which revealed women's sexual experiences and dissatisfaction, there were many other feminist philosophical works such as *The Second Sex*, *Against Our Will*, and *The Feminine Mystique*, which reflected deeply on the toxic part of society and the limitations on the free development of both genders [7]. At the same time, the authors of these books, such as Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, became active evangelists of feminism and followed up with many protest speeches [8].

Therefore, the second wave of framing seems to be two-fold in this paper, retaining the passion and radicalism of the first wave, but also a little more depth and composure, a sign that radical protest is shifting towards motivational framing.

3.3 Third wave: intersectional advocacy and motivational framing

The second wave accurately ended in an internal soundbite. The second wave of feminism developed an offshoot called Intersectional feminism, which advocated that feminism should be vocal and right for women of all races, backgrounds, and positions. The second wave was mostly for white women only, so it caused a lot of resentment among Intersectional feminists, and so the third wave happened.

The whole framing of the third wave was centered around one thing, "Intersectional feminism is the ONLY feminism". This may seem like a very protest-oriented framing, but it is not. Led by the likes of Kimberlé Crenshaw and Rebecca Walker, there are three main forms of advocacy in this wave: creating grassroots organizations to address women's real needs, designing and producing cultural products specific to intersectional feminism, and actively engaging in scholarly and public discourse to disseminate ideas [10]. These are in fact milder, more proactive and motivational forms of framing than the previous two waves.

3.4 Fourth wave: Postmodern feminism with motivational framing

The framing of feminism today has changed drastically because of the highly developed social media and the rapid advancement of technology. Large, explicit, and radical protests are rare, replaced by feminist paintings, movies, and short videos that are common on the internet. However, the popularity of videos showcasing "hegemonic feminism" and the mainstream media's one-sided coverage of feminism, which often criticizes extreme feminists who want to return society to a matriarchal society, had led to a misinterpretation of feminism [9]. In addition, the interpretation of so-called "feminism" on the internet has become more and more diversified, in this case, diversified based on misinterpretation.

For example, in the TwoXChromosomes community on reddit, new interpretations of radical feminism have emerged:

"Agree with above. While choosing between no feminism or "mild" feminism, and radical feminism - I'd go with radical any day of the week" (by ett23fyra).

Previously, Radical feminism, when it first appeared, referred to a school of thought that attributed issues of gender inequality to patriarchy. Prior to the Fourth Wave, the ideological definition of this branch was gradually polarized by outsiders into misogyny towards men. The above discussion and its context suggests that there is a segment of the community that has come to understand Radical feminism as either literally "radical" or "moderate".

In the context of internet development and freedom of expression, people have diverse perceptions of feminism and lack a fair implementation of the egalitarian principles of genuine feminism. Therefore, the discourse system of feminism exhibits variability and fluidity, serving different goals and positions.

True feminist thought was marginalized. A prominent example of the Fourth Wave feminist movement is the #metoo movement, an initiative launched by Tarana Burke that empowers women worldwide to voice their stories of sexual harassment or gender discrimination [10, 11]. The movement emerged as an offline activist movement, which subsequently evolved into an online platform. The framing of the movement, along with the Fourth Wave of feminism, does not have a clear-cut theme or a coherent framing strategy, unlike the first wave of protests, as opposed to the previous three waves.

4 Conclusion

Overall, the framing of the feminist wave has gone through a long and gentle transformation from protest to advocacy to motivational framing from its inception to the present. The first wave of framing was presented as protest, which was inspired by the right to control oral contraceptives and unequal legal and political rights; the second wave was a feminist philosophical awakening and framing throughout the wave unfolded based on the challenge of benign fixed roles of toxicity as well as societal expectations, with the main focus on advocacy and a small amount of Protest. The third wave reflected on the flaws of the second wave, and intersectionality was the main focus to protect women's rights and interests to every woman, and to publicize their ideas with speeches and other gentle ways, which is when framing is already motivational cold. Today, social media has become a key part of the promotion of feminism has become convenient and also brought troubles, due to the guidance of mainstream media and short videos with wrong values, people misinterpreted feminism, but at present, feminist framing still maintains a slow and gentle rhythm of thought improvement, so instead, it is experiencing a unique kind of silence.

In framing the future of feminism, this paper argues that the first task is to reclaim the public eye and clarify what feminism really is. Social networks, art and pop culture can be used to reach out to different audiences

and mobilize collective action, as in the case of the #metoo movement.

This paper also argues that it is time to revisit and rethink the previous waves of feminism. This is especially true today when various websites and industries still advocate sexual exploitation, gender discrimination and violence against women. For example, Backpage still operates as a platform for prostitution; some Japanese and British companies still require their female employees to wear skirts and make-up to work while male employees are not required to do so; and civil service positions in China still favor middle-aged men over women. Therefore, it is necessary to take a fresh look at the times people now live in as well as a critical look at the achievements and limitations of each wave and the lessons to be learned from them. This paper may be able to reconceptualize and reinterpret the concepts and strategies of previous waves to address contemporary issues.

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