

A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words:  
The Visual Culture of Twentieth Century  
Feminism in the United States

By

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### *Abstract*

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This thesis explores the role that visual signs and signifiers played in the resource mobilization of feminism in the United States during the twentieth century. Visual cultures are important sociological characteristics of a society by creating a symbolism that is specific to a time and place. First, social movement theory is described and how it is related to a culture's visual expression. Next, these theories are applied to each of the three "waves" of feminism that occurred during the twentieth century, as well as an explanation of the trajectory of each wave. To supplement the investigation into each wave are three case studies: images that best encompass the visual culture of a given wave, and serve to give comprehension of horizontal evolution. Finally, a discussion on the similarities and difference of each wave concerning their ideologies, mobilization techniques, and outcomes, and how the visual culture that comes out of these three aspects correlate to each. It was found that the symbols used during each wave were unique in order to best reach their target audience. These symbols were generated out of the ideology, and could also attract or alienate potential activists depending on their level of inclusivity. Lastly, the level of inclusivity tended to correlate to the success of that particular wave of feminism.

## *Chapter 1: Introduction & Literature Review*

Autumn 2014 was swept with news and media stories from The New York Times, NBC, Huffington Post, Time, Business Insider, New York Magazine, Slate, and even proclaimed feminist site Jezebel. All of these stories were on the same topic, and all of these stories take the same general stance. The subject of such news coverage was Emma Sulkowicz, a senior visual art major at Columbia University. For her senior thesis project, Emma is carrying a school-issued mattress to class every day. Yet what about a young woman and her mattress grabbed the near-undivided attention of the nation? Sulkowicz is the symbol of a culmination of a moral issue that has gained popularity recently in the United States- that of sexual assault on college campuses, and through this subtopic, feminism and women's rights.

Between the interviews and the second hand information news sources have gained possession of, Sulkowicz states that the heart of her project stems from her own sexual assault incident that occurred on the first day of her sophomore year, in her own room. She asserts that Columbia University has not properly handled her case, and that against better judgment her assailant is still allowed to be enrolled. In an effort to combat an administration that has not listened to Sulkowicz, she has turned her experience into a protest piece, and will continue this performance work until her rapist is gone from the school.

When looking at Emma Sulkowicz's art in particular, one can see why she receives so much attention from the media. This is because she has made her mission easily accessible to those around her. Her project is titled "Carry That Weight," in reference to the weight of their experience that sexual assault victims must carry with them everyday. The mattress she carries is large, bulky, and overwhelms the frame of

Sulkowicz. This visual alone engages the viewer, as it is obvious this is not an easy task for the artist. The type of mattress is the school-issued type, typically found in dorms, even here at Union College. The pairing together creates an image for the viewer that easily conveys Sulkowicz's ideas: that what happens to her stays with her, and that the school plays a part in this weight (figuratively) she carries by not correctly handling her case. Regardless of the validity of her story, Sulkowicz has become entrenched in the visual culture in the United States and reached the minds and hearts of thousands. It is this aspect to her story that is the basis for this thesis: that we, as members of a greater society, have a universal visual vocabulary that we can access and utilize this vocabulary to assert our resolutions. This thesis takes this concept one step further and applies it to social movements and social movement theory, using twentieth century feminism in the United States as the case study.

While Sulkowicz's story is more than a decade out from the year 2000, one will be able to clearly identify her placement within the history of feminist visual culture. By further examining this visual culture, one can determine what the activists like Sulkowicz had to say, and what it reflects about the social conditions of society at that time, and how those two prior conditions interact.

### **Social Movement Theory**

In 2011, Time magazine elected "the protester" for their annual Person of the Year award (Johnston 2014). This year was full of many active social movements globally, aiming at anything from overthrowing the current government to environmentalism. What is it about social movements that have captured the attention of the United States? How are social movements successful in capturing

this attention? The answer to this question has emerged over decades of practice with the help of social movements of the past. However, before one can approach the history and lineage of social movements, one must first determine exactly what a social movement is in the first place, and what it is about these subcultures within society that allow them to influence over the larger, more normative facets.

These groups that exist mostly outside the established and institutional channels are always guided purposefully and strategically (Johnston 2014). Furthermore, these groups take place in what is known as a “social movement scene,” as defined by sociologists Darcy Leach and Sebastian Haunss as people “who share a common identity and a common set of subcultural or countercultural beliefs, values, norms” as well as the network of physical places they frequent (Creasap 2012, 182). This unique aspect to social movements makes them attractive to sociologists, and as such many definitions of a social movement have appeared over time. These theories are simultaneously timeless and specific to the time and place in which they were generated: thus not all theory can be applied to all social movements. However, there are some aspects to social movements that sociologists agree on as hallmarks of these sociological phenomena. The first of which is that there is usually a progressive goal derived from collective ideologies, interests, and values (Johnston 2014). This collective is structurally diverse- it is made up of many smaller organizations and groups, whether formal or informal, that form a network for the greater cause (Johnston 2014). These groups have “performances” to raise awareness to their cause, either through sit-ins, marches, rallies, meetings, picketing, or a mix or other unmentioned methods (Johnston 2014). Over time,

cohesion forms amongst members of the social movement thanks to its composition of many smaller groups that are easier to maintain as well as through demonstrations of solidarity from the performances (Johnston 2014). Finally, this continuity that is developed is part of the collective identity as a whole (Johnston 2014). Aside from these five features, the theories surrounding social movements and their characteristics are many and diverse.

If one examines these five characteristics, much of the features that all social movements possess are related to the collective identity of the movement- how that collective forms and/or how it functions. This collective is actually a greater sociological phenomenon found in nationalism, religion, management, and politics amongst other areas of society (Fominaya 2010). Collective identity gives rise to the idea that a group of people can have an identity that is different than the sum of its parts, usually done by putting forth the ideals of the groups that each member may adhere to in different degrees. In social movements, the identity is oppositional by nature to normative cultural practices (Fominaya 2010). This characteristic is intrinsic to the collective identity of social movements, and concurrently makes it unique from other areas of society. While other collectives may have facets that are countercultural, social movements by definition are. Additionally, similar to other collectives, solidarity is formed and maintained by shared leadership, organization, ideologies and rituals (Fominaya 2010). Going through these motions ensure that the group to check in to make sure they are, as a collective and individually, still actively pursuing the same goal as dictated by the movement. The upkeep of



solidarity is crucial in any group so that the individuals remain dedicated to the group as a whole- “a chain is only as strong as its weakest link”-type of mentality.

One of the most universally accepted earlier theories on social movements and their developments is that of Herbert Blumer. Part of The Chicago School, Blumer aided in the creation of the symbolic interactionist theory as well as putting forth his own personal theory on social movements in 1969 (Crossley 2002). First shared with the public in 1951, Blumer believes that coalescence amongst individuals emerges gradually over time, first through the spread of unrest and agitation, and then through the realization of a shared awareness of a shared consciousness (Johnston 2014). Blumer makes it a point to be precise in his definition of collective behavior in reference to social movements. There is a distinct difference between generic collective behavior and that associated with social movements (Crossley 2002). The first is usually concerned with norms that are already in place, whereas the latter is concerned with the manifestation of new norms (Crossley 2002). This concern with the desire to create new norms assists with the fostering of a new collective identity. As this new identity develops, shared goals and the strategy to reach these goals emerge as well (Johnston 2014). In more specific terms, there is an established leadership, division of labor, social rules, values, customs, and traditions (Crossley 2002). If successful, the result is known as “emergent norms,” or norms that emerge as the new social expectation (Johnston 2014). While prior to the social movement these emergent norms would have been considered as countercultural, the victory of the social movement triggers social change and thus a change in norms. A more specific timeline of events broken down

into more defined steps on the road to the creation of a social movement by Crossley (2002):

1. Agitation: social unrest from the current state of affairs in the society. It is incredibly important in that the regular rules of life are suspended as people are thinking in ways that violate the norm. This often comes from some sort of “shock” event.
2. Espirit de corps: the formation of solidarity, often accomplished through the promotion of informal gatherings.
3. Development of morale: borrow terms from theology, emergence of “saints” and “martyrs” as well as the collective identity.
4. Formation of ideology: now that both solidarity among group members exists as well as a common character, the exact goals and wants of the group are defined in this stage. Another way of phrasing this is “a system of ideas that couples assertions and theories about the nature of social life with values and norms relevant to the goals that promote or resist social change” (Johnston 2014, 18).
5. Tactics: the ways in which the group intends on reaching its goals are determined.

Once this point in the formation of a social movement is reached, the movement, through its individual groups, puts the plans from the “Tactics” stage into motion. The way in which this is done follows an almost cyclical or recursive pattern. As the group(s) of people that make up the social movement grow and

change, steps two and three need to be repeated in order to confirm that the group maintains a unified identity and collective behavior. And because social movements do not occur in a bubble isolated from the rest of society (in fact, it is quite the opposite), steps four and five must be continually reevaluated so that the ideals and the strategy to reach those ideals are the most current and relevant to society.

While Blumer's is one of the most widely known and accepted sociological theories on social movements, his is by far not the only one. Another popular theory is that of Neil Smelser. While not as complete as Blumer's, Smelser's take on social movements allows for another reason behind many of the events first described by Blumer. Smelser sees social systems as institutionalized patterns of interaction, with four distinctly arranged levels of integration (Crossley 2002). Furthermore, collective behavior arises when there are strains within the system, and the activity generated by collective behavior correlates to one of the four levels.

It can be predicted that a collective behavior will arise in the presence of six preceding events: structural conduciveness- meaning that a new collective behavior can be tolerated in a given society, structural strain within that society, growth and spread of generalized belief, precipitating factors-e.g. "a trigger event," mobilization of participants and networks, and operation of social control (Crossley 2002).

Once this collective behavior and identity have been established, the tactics that are utilized correlate with the system elements they seek to address (Crossley 2002). In value-oriented social movements, the values of society are sought to be adjusted. This means that the very cornerstones of society, values, are questioned in order to give rise to alleviated stress (Crossley 2002). Norms are addressed in

norm-oriented social movements, which seek to change the normative structure in the society in which the social movement exists (Crossley 2002). Hostile outbursts, in which a person, group, or institution are thought to be the source of problems and hence is place under attack correlates to the organization level (Crossley 2002). Finally, crazes or panics target situational facilities. These types of reactions attempt to escape from a stressful environment and focus on an immediate “solution,” which is often not a solution at all (Crossley 2002).

With all of these characteristics of social movements in mind, one must look to the history of social movements to understand their development over time. Particularly during the nineteenth century, there were several communist revolutions (Tilly 2004). Why is this important? At the heart of communism is the desire for all to be treated equally. As such, the social movements that emerged during the twentieth century are concerned with this equality. During the 1960s exactly was the emergence of what is known as the “new social movement” (Tilly 2004). Although the existence of these new social movements dates back to the nineteenth century as noted Craig Calhoun, “the possibility that proliferation of new social movements is normal and not in need of special explanation because it violates the oppositions of left and right, cultural and social, public and private, aesthetic and instrumental that organize so much of our thought” (Tilly 2004, 36). While these social movements already had a history, for the first time they came to the forefront and demanded recognition in the twentieth century.

Several other theories emerged later in the twentieth century to further explain the social movements that occurred from the 1960s through the 1980s.

These theories differ from theories of the past in that attention was paid attention to culture. Culture can be conceptualized as the combination of the norms, values, and beliefs that is institutionalized and integrated within a given society (Williams 2004). Conversely, these norms, values, and beliefs can also be a constraint on society, out of which the relationship between culture and social movements arises. One of which is known as “New Social Movement” Theory. Headed by four sociologists, New Social Movement Theory is rooted in European Marxist tradition (Buechler 1995). Marxism focused on economic problems and considered this inequality first over all others- hence ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are overlooked or completely forgotten. Due to this, when social issues originating in culture arose, classical Marxism proved to be inadequate. It comes out of Resource Mobilization Theory, which “emphasizes political context and goals but also states that social movements are unlikely to emerge without necessary resources” (Conley 2011, 680). New Social Movement Theory has become the predominant paradigm for studying collective action over time (Buechler 1995). New Social Movement Theory is associated with four sociologists- Castells of Spain, Touraine of France, Melucci of Italy, and Habermas of Germany (Buechler 1995). This leadership under more than one theorist has lead to pluralism in New Social Movement Theory as a whole. That being said, there are six qualities of New Social Movement Theory that all sub-theories describe (Buechler 1995):

1. They engage civil society or the cultural sphere as an arena for collective action by emphasizing symbolic action.

2. Promote autonomy and self-determination instead of attempting to maximize power and influence.
3. Rather than take part in conflicts over material resources, new social movements tend to be concerned with non-material social problems.
4. Problematize the process of construction of collective identities and identifying group interest.
5. Stresses the socially constructed nature of grievances and ideology.
6. Recognize the variety of latent and underground networks rather than give all credit to centralized organizations.

The New Social Movements acknowledge the importance of collective action and the historical/societal context in which they arise (Williams 2004). Particularly in the United States, there was a focus on culture- symbols, language, discourse, identity, and other characteristics that were utilized to recruit, retain, motivate and mobilize members (Williams 2004). This comes out of symbolic interactionist theory, where contact between individuals and groups are filled with reason. It is a departure from classical Marxism and even Resource Mobilization Theory because New Social Movement Theory is much more sensitive to the role that culture plays in the formation of a social movement.

Interestingly, New Social Movements are unique in general compared to the totality of its predecessors in the role that culture plays. These social movements are geared towards challenging cultural orientation over politics (Buechler 1995). While they have a history that reaches back through the twentieth and even nineteenth century, New Social Movements first emerged mixed with political

ideology in the 1960s, but by the 1970s and 1980s social movements shifted to questioning identity and identity politics (Buechler 1995). As echoed in the 1970s during Second Wave Feminism, “the personal is political,” this quote accurately describes the change that New Social Movements took from previous movements.

Again during this time “Framing” theory of social movements emerges, first described in the theories of Erving Goffman. For Goffman, framing is a schema that allows individuals to interpret the world around them by being able to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” (Benford & Snow 2000, 614). In essence, framing can be used in order to help us understand and make events meaningful. In regards to social movements, there are action-oriented sets of beliefs that have meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization (Benford & Snow 2000). This theory, while not brand new in the field of sociology, had small beginnings and since has gained momentum as witnessed through the amount it has been discussed amongst social movement specialists, as well as recorded. Another characteristic of frames that can predict the trajectory of a social movement is their ability to be adaptable. This concept is conceptualized into two specific categories: flexible/rigid and inclusive/exclusive (Benford & Snow 2000). The flexibility of a frame is its capability to change and modulate, while the inclusivity of a frame is its capacity to include broader audiences and concepts. The more flexible and inclusive a social movement is the better chance it has at becoming a “master frame” (Benford & Snow 2000). By becoming a master frame, a social movement diffuses and is more likely to be successful.

What is important about framing in regards to the case study on feminism is its ability to be applied its visual culture. The visual culture of a wave feminism is essentially a method of visually showing how the activists are framing the movement. Therefore, it is crucial that the goals and the visual culture cooperate with one another, and if not, shows a flaw in the movement and its ideology. As stated by McVeigh, Myers, and Sikkink in "Structure and Framing Social Movements," "Mobilization efforts benefit when movement framing is congruent with location," but that "it's political advantage may be off-set... if... the construction of collective identity boundaries alienates the broader population and stimulates backlash" (McVeigh, Myers, and Sikkink 2004, 653). Thus is also crucial for the activists to visually express themselves in a way that does not alienate bystanders that they desire to become participants. As such, what a movement wants to accomplish and what they need from participants should affect visual production.

Social movements can target a range of audiences, and falls on a spectrum of what its goals are related to how integrated in society it would like the change it desires in that audience. This is extremely important because the answer to these two questions affects the development of the social movements. Ones that target particular subgroups fall into two categories- ones that desire total change in this targeted population, known as redemptive social movements, while the other, alternative, only focuses on a limited social change. Social movements that target and entire society can either fall under limited social change, or reformative, or a radical change in the entire society, or revolutionary. The differing ways social



movements desire change dictates the audience that the social movement hopes to reach, as well as what the end goal with that audience.

It is crucial to note that the aim of all social movements is to change society, and that this change is specifically referring to transformations in social institutions, political organizations, and cultural norms over time. Interestingly, social movements ultimately produce a paradox: a successful social movement is one that “should end up destroying itself, because it will have solved the problem that motivated its very existence” (Conley 2011, 702). Social movements will continue throughout the twenty-first century to rise and fall, as they demand attention and social change. Yet the manner and methods in which they command their audiences has and will evolve, as culture does the same.

### **Art in Social Movements**

Social movements are special because the goals they aim for and the methods with which they do so echo the specific time and place of their society. The tactics that a social movement may utilize can range from letter writing to performances, but more often than not they include visual aspects. This is done so that the general audience may be engrossed by the tactics and then later become involved in the social movement itself. Visual production can be used in order to gain the audience’s attention, in many different ways, shapes, and forms. However, the art that is employed will only be utilized in a way that makes the most sense for that social movement in the society in which it exists. Hence, the art of social movements can

give us a lot of information about the cultural context of the past, particularly the peoples that lived in it.

Artists, or “cultural producers” consciously employ different art forms- be it film, music, or visual arts- in order to translate the debates of the public arena into creative expression (Mahon 2000). The subjects of these debates vary, but are all under attack from the cultural producers due to the stereotypes they may possess and perceived prejudices. The cultural producer seeks to reconfigure, communicate, and construct meanings of these subjects that are associated with their ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, and national identities (Mahon 2000). In turn, new identities can be produced by the adoption of different forms as suggested by the cultural producers. These artists are members of a greater collective: the general public of the society in which they exist. This means that as a member of the general public, the artist is constantly bombarded with facts, figures, images, and concepts that such members are receptors to. They firsthand experience the very debates that they are targeting, and perhaps some of the most attentive to the sources and content of their bombardment.

Many forces constantly vie for attention, be it from television, workplace rules, entertainment stores (Morales 1990). This is a battle not only for attention, but also over meaning that is ascribed to the very things that gain our notice in public arenas (Morales 1990). Whoever, or whatever, controls these public spaces aids in shaping of the general collective mindset. This can be important for the political art theorist, as having a stake in this public arena is imperative to influencing the public opinion. Yet how can revolutionary art access this public? Art

has a way of being able to engage the collective dreamlife of society (Morales 1990). What this means is that art can express the deepest hopes, fears, and truths that are suppressed in daily life (Morales 1990). By bringing these forth, art can therefore be a way for society to process dreaming, thinking, speaking to itself, reflecting on the past, and finding new ways forward (Morales 1990). Social movements specifically desire for these pathways to be taken by society, thus utilizing activist art can be helpful. In order to reach these pathways, social movements take specific steps in order to maximize their ability to influence their audience.

There are certain characteristics of revolutionary art, and specific steps social movements take in its utilization. These characteristics include love for one's people, clear thinking about the people and dreams, and finally the execution of the art itself- that is, to be able to reach the collective subconscious through the sensory (Morales 1990). For social movements in particular the question is to then be able to make art that can do all of this, and use it to mobilize potential actors for the social movement. Art can impact the stimulus of mobilization processes of social movements in two major ways (Everhart 2014). The first of these ways is the communication to the public and the henceforth visibility of the movements, and the second one being the emotional works of the movement (Everhart 2014). These two interact to create a dynamism that allows the art to evoke an emotional response from the viewer, to create the preferred visibility of the social movement. A social movement that generates a dramatic emotional response is more likely to have a higher visibility, due to its shock value. The ability for art to have such control

demonstrates the power it holds in the social movement, yet also beyond the movement's borders.

The role of art in social movements displays the important status it holds in society as well. Yet, while art can aid in defining society, society in turn defines art. The definition and concept of art is constantly changing, and is therefore incredibly difficult to define (Everhart 2014). Even art movement themselves of the past, notably Dada<sup>1</sup>, looks at the relationship between art and the attempt to define it (Everhart 2014). This is when we first see the idea of art and play in social movements (Shepard 2011). Dada points out the ridiculous in society, which can often be the same goal of a social movement. Art can be useful for social change due to six characteristics: the ability for art to create community as well as bring new political actors into the arena, aids in group development, bridges the gap between heart and mind- appeals to our emotional selves, sustains organizing efforts, validates different ways of working in the world, and supports a holistic organizing strategy (Shepard 2011). All of these features are important because they support social movements and social change in a way that is more organic, meaning that the social movement is able to grow and change without pressures from an institution. Art can appeal to the emotions while simultaneously engaging our mind, and mobilizing actors to become involved. As a result, art influences the actors and in turn society. The "social practice art," over different times and different mediums, demonstrates the mutual effect that art and society can have on one another

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<sup>1</sup> Dada was an avant-garde art movement dating from 1916 and was international. It was not united in style, but by the ideology of rejection of conformity in thought and art- thus, posing the question of what it means for something to be "art" (MOMA 2014).

(Everhart 2014). This is due to the fact that art is in actuality to some extent a social being. The artist does not exist in a vacuum, thus, all art produced will be to some extent the product of the society. The imagination is a function of the subconscious mind, which in turn is influenced by the collective mind of the society (Constable 1922). And what better for an actor and artist be a member of the society in which he wishes to change? Only a member of a given society understands best the visual language of his culture. Therefore, the artist can adequately describe the social change of his society utilizing symbolic resources as signifiers of the collective identity (Fominaya 2010).

This aspect of the artist can become incredibly important in different social movements over time. Artists as contributors for social change can aid in the mobilization, but also general education to the public. To be able to educate the general public can affect the trajectory of the social movement as a whole, yet how the artist does this is unique to art. The artist accesses the signifiers of the collective and employs the shorthand of the visual to further the mission of the social movement. The exactness of these signifiers comes out of a range of socially and culturally specific aesthetic codes (Mahon 2000). This is known as cultural production, when the images and discourses the conjure aid in embodying group concerns, express self-identities, and make political commentaries (Mahon 2000).

### **General Sociology of Art**

The purpose of art, ultimately, is to communicate one idea from the creator, or artist, to the viewer. The root in this assertion is that there is an implication that

creative spirituality and social life can meet (Duvignaud 1967). This idea can be as simple as an appreciation for aesthetics, or perhaps a more specific and content-based goal. However these ideas are often reliant on the times in which the art was produced, as the content-based goals are usually critiques on some aspect of society be it social or political. Ultimately, in order to understand art as a whole, not only the individual works of art must be known, but additionally the cultural life in which they are a part (Finkelstein 1947). This cultural life is created by society, and gives rise to much of what is considered to be the cultural capital of a given time and place. Regardless if an artist shows limited or full understanding of these concepts, he will either accept them or be aware of the contradictions within the culture (Finkelstein 1947). Either way, this acceptance or rejection of culture and/or cultural norms will help shape the work produced. Because art is so rooted in culture as a whole, imagination cannot be separated from the general influences at that time when the piece was created (Duvignaud 1967). As such, a work of art is highly specific to its time, making it impossible to truly recreate works from the past (Finkelstein 1947). It is characteristic of the work of art to come out of a collective experience as a member in society.

It has been theorized that there is a correlation between social experience as a whole and the expression of one's own particular time notated by an individual through an imagined representation (Duvignaud 1967). Yet how do others of this time know and are able to interpret this time sensitive material? Again, one returns to the concept of art as communication... "art is not a thing, but an act; not an object, but a communication" (Finkelstein 1947). Art is a form of communicating, and this

language is developed not by an individual, but rather the society in which the individual exists. For example, in many cultures, the use of the color white suggests innocence and purity. However in others, it is a color associated with death. Thus, the society in which the artist resides may dictate much of the way he or she chooses to convey his or her thoughts to others. Even within a given culture the cultural norms may change over time, and in turn so may the art. Art cannot have a permanent definition due to changes in the artists, society, and the place that these artists hold in society (Finkelstein 1947). While the art itself may change, the form within the art maintains the same purpose over time- as “a pattern of language that embodies a perception of emotion not found in the separate language elements” (Finkelstein 1947). The form as composed of by line comes together and is “read” by the viewer (Finkelstein 1947). One looks at a work of art, and through the use of line seeks to find what the artist is looking to suggest (Finkelstein 1947). The suggestion of the subject comes out of the communicative character of art and how it takes from the perception of life, but then manipulates or develops this character (Finkelstein 1947). This aspect of art is what makes it so integral to society- that it is able to express in no words thoughts and emotions that cannot be verbalized yet can be imparted to the viewer.

In effect, the creation of art has always been one of the functions of society. Sometimes it is allied to institutions of government, law, or religion (Finkelstein 1947). Sometimes it binds people within those institutions together, or perhaps more importantly, allying itself to new institutions that arose to replace the outmoded ones (Finkelstein 1947). Art often appears to be connected with the

change from one type of social experience to another, either from internal or external influences (Duvignaud 1967). As such, the art that comes from social change can be important because it may signify a change in the visual language of art, or can utilize already existent visual language to suggest new ideas. In societies individuals share, on a spectrum of intense to superficial level, certain common symbols (Duvignaud 1967). This tradition dates back to ancient cultures in theocratic societies of the “Fertile Crescent.” For these peoples of the past, the illusory value of symbolic expression was emphasized (Duvignaud 1967). Therefore, there was a visual language that everyone in the society understood when he or she saw these symbols. Usually, art was used in these cultures as an intercessory power between the worldly and otherworldly, making the knowledge of these symbols important to the general public in order to properly practice religion (Duvignaud 1967). Movement through time to ancient Greece shows a small shift in the usage of symbols, but nonetheless still has transcendent power. During this time, it was common to make a nude sculpture of a man, often a warrior, after his death. The nudity was seen as a costume, as an ideal, rather than the person’s actual body. These sculptures were meant to commemorate the warrior for his bravery and skills- the celebration of an individual through a eulogy. However, it was also a protest against suffering and mortality (Duvignaud 1967).

Later in Renaissance Italy, artists such as Alberti, Leonardo, and Tintoretto had a fascination with people and the human body (Duvignaud 1967). All of these men had a determination to handle the essential experience of man and the space he takes up- as if people were a theorem to be proved (Duvignaud 1967, 23). This shift



from solely theological subjects to others marks the beginning of an interest in art that still persists to today, “art, in this sense, corresponds to this ambitious attempt to organize and develop human experience” (Duvignaud 1967, 27). This is relevant to Feminism and other more contemporary social movements because of our rich visual culture as human dates back to our earliest history, thus demonstrating how intrinsic art is to the human experience.

Art today, while still seeking this same cause, has a much different cultural context. Media heavily influences the current state of the world, and much of media is visual. While this can give rise to symbols that have a global understanding, the creation of new symbols can be much more difficult as the general public is continually bombarded with images. With the multiplurality that is found, in order to effectively and fully engage its usefulness, the artist must resort to symbols that are more intense and paradoxical (Duvignaud 1967). Furthermore, art is no longer just for the elites anymore, to the extent that kitsch has been widely accepted, although seen as a lower art form. However, it recommends a new form of communication, and better caters to the needs of modern societies (Duvignaud 1967).

In *Sociology of Art*, Duvignaud puts forth three conclusions on the subject. The first is that artistic imagination involves a participation that can never be measured, meaning that it is difficult to truly understand the extent that participation can affect art. The second is that to a large extent art anticipates what is possible experience by drawing on actual experiences. While the artist may create through his or her work a fictional representation of a fictional reality, it does not

mean that perhaps either or both of these realities may in some way come true as they are based in true social experience. Finally, it is a wager on the capacity of human beings to invent new relationships and to experience hitherto unknown emotions. These wagers can translate into new social or cultural capital eventually, and then in turn be described in art.

These three conclusions come out of the change and development of humans, their experiences, and the art that they produced as a result of these experiences. This art can be used as a method of communication to others part of the same society, either to reinforce norms or to challenge them, but either way the artist will incorporate methods of form that the intended viewer will be able to understand.

Ultimately, when discussing the sociology of art, one tends to think of the influence that begins with art and then moves toward society (Hauser 1982). Yet, there is another piece to the puzzle- the ability for society to move towards art. Art and social change affect each other, meaning that each can be both the object and the subject (Hauser 1982). Interestingly, the history that art would have in a given society is determined long before either truly have true holds on one another. When the time comes for society to decide if something is art, it is scarcely influenced by art itself (Hauser 1982). As the role of art in society progresses, it contributes more to society and social change. What this means is that ultimately art becomes a social factor when society decides it is one (Hauser 1982). Yet this may tell much about society and its evolution, because by the time art as a social factor is accepted means that whatever that art conveys has already been in the mind of the general public for some time and deem it important. However, it is important to keep in mind that the

part art plays in the formation of society is not always equally apparent or important (Hauser 1982). As such, it is often the lesser known artists throughout time that have had a lasting impact on society, because they are the ones that were willing to critique society rather than conform to it.

The relationship between art and society is important because one reveals information about the other. Tumultuous times within a given culture may be expressed through art, and this expression can lead to social change. Furthermore, the artist that makes this revolutionary art must use only signs and signifiers that the society she or he is aiming to affect can understand. The ability to utilize, or even identify, these signifiers is telling about the personality of the society. A given culture will have symbols that are unique just to that society, and the artist's job is to apply these symbols. Yet, in order to apply symbols, symbols as accepted by a society must exist. And as they exist and are used by art, they too are changed by art.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, visual expression and society exist in a symbiotic relationship where each can influence the progress of the other. Social movements are a more formal way of influencing this social change, and art can help in the achievement of the social movement, as it may know better than even other tactics the way into the hearts and minds of the people it wishes to influence. This thesis will take social movement theory and visual production in the United States and apply these ideas to the social movement of feminism during the course of the twentieth century. Over the course of methodical examination, the different ways that generally accepted

signs and signifiers have been used by feminism in order to convey their message to the general public will be revealed. The exploration of the visual culture of feminism will also reveal much about the characteristics of the social movement themselves, as well as the society in which they exist. In essence, these activists are using what they believe are going to be the most effective visual signifiers. And thus, the sociological interpretation begs to ask why.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

Taking what is known of the relationship between visual expression and the society in which it can exist in turn provides a multitude of conclusions that can be derived. One is the ability for the visual culture of a social movement within a given society to reflect the signs and signifiers of that society in order to produce social change. To examine this more closely, a case study was done on twentieth century feminism in the United States. This specific social movement was chosen because it has a well-developed history in the United States over the entire century from 1900-2000, allowing for evolution of both the social movement itself, as well as its visual culture. Utilizing feminism and the United States were done so that the social movement essentially has the same ideology, and so that the signs and symbols used in the visual expression of feminism would target the visual vocabulary in solely the United States. Although the terminology has fallen out of use in the field of gender studies and feminism, each chapter will be divided by “waves” of feminism. It is recognized that between each of these waves feminist activity persisted between these “waves,” however rather these waves are seen as peaks in activity among activists and the general society (Baxandal and Gordon 2000).

First Wave Feminism, or the Suffrage Movement, is studied from around 1903 when there was a shift to the younger generation of feminists from the nineteenth century leaders, to 1919 when the Nineteenth Amendment was passed. Second Wave Feminism is bookended between 1963 and 1983, the year that Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* was published and the Equal Rights Amendment failed to pass, respectively. These dates were chosen because they represented concrete

examples of the life and death of this wave of feminism, although in reality activity was done on either sides of those dates. Third Wave Feminism was set from 1983 to 1998. It is accepted that Third Wave feminist ideologies emerged in 1983, parallel to the death of the Equal Rights Amendment, and marks a generational shift in feminism ideology. Finally, 1998 is the closing point as it is around this year that the emergence of cyberfeminism emerges, or utilizing new technology such as the personal computer and the Internet. This cuts a little close to the end of the century, as well as demonstrates a complete change in medium and modes of communication, and is really linked more to activism in the twenty-first century.

Each of the case studies is described in a similar format. First, their general history is discussed. This general history includes the emergence of the wave, the mobilization techniques and formation of collective identity, the ideology and goals, and the “death” of the wave. The general history is followed by explaining the visual culture of the social movement- what the activists were visually stating and why. The visual culture is accompanied by specific examples as manifested in sub-case studies, or three images that were chosen to be the overall best representatives of visual expression. What this means is that the images chosen were done based on images that best represented the time, by either being a representation of other images in a category of images crucial to the visual culture of that wave of feminism, or rather encompassing best a time and place in history by being the most popular or common visuals. Each sub-case study is then analyzed for its form and content, and what it reveals to viewer about the particular movement it belongs to, and also the further deductions that can be made about the society in which it exists. The

different mediums and characteristics of the visual culture were examined in order to arrive at a holistic understand of the time period and the visual vocabulary it possessed, and how feminism accessed that visual vocabulary to pursue their goals.

Each case study is completed with tying together the general history and the visual culture in their relationship with social movement theory, and which social movement theories best apply. Finally, a conclusion is made on the movement: was it or was it not successful in it goals as asserted by its visual culture? These conclusions are supplemented with a review of the movement's framing, and if how the movement was framed and expressed through signs and symbols could have affected the outcome.

### **Chapter 3: First Wave Feminism**

First Wave Feminism has a rich and extensive history with massive amounts of activity that spans from the mid nineteenth century through the early twentieth century. Due to the expansive time that First Wave Feminism occupies, there were two generations of leaders, followed by two different generations of ideology. The first leaders from the nineteenth century to about 1900 included Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott. With the turn of the twentieth century, a new and younger generation of suffragists took over. Susan B. Anthony retired as the president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, founded in 1890, in 1900, and was replaced by Carrie Chapman Catt (“A History of the American Suffragist Movement” 1997). Two years later is the death of Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1902, which further lead to the decline of the power of the nineteenth century leaders. With this turnover of leadership, the turn of the century marks a substantial change in the ideology of the Suffrage Movement (Buechler 1990). Due to this shift, research will focus on from 1900 to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment on August 26, 1919.

In the 1850s, the campaign for women’s suffrage was coupled with the demand for additional women’s rights in both the public and private sphere (Buechler 1990). This agenda also had an ideology rooted in the “justice argument” for the vote, meaning that activists believe women deserved the right to vote because it was just and consistent with basic tenants of American society as outlined in the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution (Buechler 1990). However, the start of a new century ushered in a new ideology and new



objectives. After 1900, “expediency arguments” stated that women needed the vote in order to accomplish other goals and objectives, including temperance and protective legislation (Buechler 1990). In essence, activists had an agenda separate from suffrage, and saw suffrage as a prerequisite to these goals. In addition to this change in ideology, by the 1910s, the demand for suffrage had detached from the larger program of women’s rights in public and at home (Buechler 1990 & Tobias 1997). Thus, it lost much of its feminist origins for the rights of women, and instead transferred focus to other social reforms.

During the first decade of the 1900s, three new organizational actors emerged that had not been seen during the nineteenth century. The first is the social reformers of the settlement house movement integrating across class and ethnic lines in dense urban neighborhoods- the rapid urbanization that began with the Industrial Revolution lead to the need for some control over this (Buechler 1990). Next, one offspring of the settlement house organization was the Women’s Trade Union League (Buechler 1990). Formed in 1903 by Harriot Stanton Blanch, this feminist organization fostered progressive improvements by uniting upper, middle, and working class women under the umbrella of “women’s work” (Buechler 1990). Finally, a growing number of women’s clubs, reflected the tradition of “voluntarist politics” (Buechler 1990). While these women came from conservative orientations, their work lead them to become more diversified and open to suffrage (Buechler 1990). While all three were tentative and slow, they were still a departure from the feminist culture of the 1800s. Combined, the Suffrage Movement became a multi-class movement in the twentieth century, led many upper class women desiring to

maintain control but also conduct social housekeeping, and the working class women desired occupational equality (Tobias 1997).

As the 1900s turned into the 1910s, more and more suffrage was granted on a state level. This was a persistent problem among suffragists as they were not sure whether to focus on the federal level or the state level (Buechler 1990). Alice Paul, a suffragist leader transplanted from the suffrage movement in Britain, felt strongly about targeting the federal government as had been done in Britain (Buechler 1990). Alice Paul and Lucy Burns founded a more radical subgroup within the NAWSA, called the Congressional Union and later the National Women's Party, in 1912 (Banks 1981). They argued that the only way to gain suffrage was to put pressure on Congress and to focus on a national plane (Banks 1981). At the 1913 NAWSA convention, the Congressional Union proposed to adopt a solely federal tactic, which was rejected by NAWSA, as they promoted a nonpartisanship approach, and they removed Paul from the Congressional Committee (Buechler 1990). The Congressional Union split with NAWSA in 1914 and then officially in 1916 (Banks 1981). That same year, Carrie Chapman Catt put forth her "winning plan," which was meant to be a blitz campaign that mobilized state and local suffrage organizations all over the country ("The Fight for Women's Suffrage"). In effect, NAWSA targeted local levels with more gentle and subdued tactics, while NWP conducted hunger strikes and White House pickets aimed at dramatic publicity ("The Fighter for Women's Suffrage").

From the social movement theory perspective, it is very interesting to compare the tactics and identity of these two organizations. NAWSA was

heterogeneous, inclusive, large, welcomed membership to any degree, and tolerated a wide range of perspectives (Buechler 1990). “It was so large and tolerant and undisciplined that it was as much a follower as a leader in this stage of the movement” (Buechler 1990, 45). Conversely, the Congressional Union was defined in its identity and goals, and in 1914 and 1915 was more successful (Buechler 1990). It founded the Women’s Party in 1916, then the two combined the following year. However, this group was much more militant and later harder for the public to understand.

Interestingly, it is not so much that the Suffrage Movement was successful in changing the opinions of society. While new states and territories saw women as equals because they helped to settle the frontier, those territories had not much trouble granting women the vote- even California in 1911 earned suffrage with minimal assistance from NAWSA (“A History of the American Suffragist Movement” 1997). Instead, over time, women’s suffrage became more about the “educated vote” rather than equal rights (Banks 1981). New immigrants that threatened the American way of life were anti-suffrage, and linked with temperance, morphed into being about social control. Wealthier Americans whose families had existed in the United States felt that granted women the right to vote would result in only “educated” women from the upper class voting, hence further diminishing the power of the lower class- whose women would be banned from voting by their husbands (Tobias 1997). Temperance also comes out of this idea, that these “educated” women voters could promote temperance and then even further social control of the lower classes. Furthermore, the suffrage movement cut ties with the

black community (Banks 1981). Ultimately, the movement became most successful when it aligned itself with the leaders of the country it was trying to persuade rather than challenge them. The combination of the Congressional Union militancy, NAWSA moderation, state successes, and shifting political opportunity structures lead to the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Yet it seems that the women of the 1900s had forgotten their legacy of the 1800s, and the social movement of the twentieth century reflects that (Tobias 1997). The visual culture of early twentieth century feminism often does not appear to ask for women's rights outside of the right to vote. As later outlined, the activists utilized the signs and signifiers that were already present, and did not press their usage into something new. Rather, they bought into the masculine ideal, as in the dominant view of masculinity in the United States at this time, of femininity, and perhaps this giving up of equal treatment set the stage for feminist movements later in the century.

### **The Visual Culture of First Wave Feminism**

When studying the American Suffrage Movement, the sociological context is incredibly important to understand the visual culture. How and why the suffragists chose the way to visually represent themselves as they did is important as this is before television, the internet, cell phones, iPads, even widespread color printing, and all of the other things in our lives that make it the image and visually saturated world it is today. Hence, the symbolic language that this culture had was in many ways simpler and more effective. Suffragists did not need to find ways to “wow”

viewers with shocking visuals. Instead, they drew upon an already existent visual vocabulary and employed them in the pursuit of their own goals- no modification of this vocabulary was even needed.

## Sub-Case Studies

### Sub-Case Study 1: *Columbia* from the March of 1913



*Columbia from the Library of Congress*

On Monday, March 3, 1913, lawyer Inez Miholland lead the great woman suffrage parade of over 5,000 marchers down Pennsylvania Ave in Washington DC (Library of Congress 2001). This march took place right before President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, causing the march to be overwhelmed by crowds of men visiting forcing the march at some points to be single file. Two ambulances constantly came and went for six hours, as one hundred marchers were taken to the

hospital for injuries sustained from the crowd interfering with the march. Through all of this, many still arrived to the endpoint- the Treasury building.

Here, over one hundred women and children acted out an allegorical tableau created specifically for this event. It outlined ideals men and women collectively had been struggling with through the ages. Together, “those ideals toward which both men and women have been struggling through the ages and toward which, in co-operation and equality, they will continue to strive” (Library of Congress 2001). The final tableau featured Columbia, surrounded by Justice, Charity, Liberty, Peace, and Hope watching the oncoming procession. The scene was described as “one of the most impressively beautiful spectacles ever staged in this country” (Library of Congress 2001).

It is clear that during this time, anyone who saw the character Columbia would instantly know what she represented. The sociological implications of this are great- as a society that existed one hundred years ago prior in the same country had a symbol recognized by all, but by present day was not only forgotten, but completely unknown (National Women’s History Museum 2007). Research reveals that her history dates back to 1738, when the British Gentlemen’s Magazine used her name as a poetic name for America (Franke-Ruta 2013). By the 1770s, she had become imposing, warlike, and draped in stars and stripes. It is from this personification of America that we derive the namesake of the District of Columbia, Columbia University, and Columbia Broadcasting Systems (CBS) (Franke-Ruta 2013). The unofficial national anthem of the United States was even “Hail, Columbia” until “The Star Spangled Banner” became the official national anthem in 1931

(Franke-Ruta 2013). Ironically, with the role of real women in civic life increasing in the 1920s, the presence of an allegorical woman did not make sense and the use of Columbia diminished. Additionally, she inadvertently alienated Americans during the First World War due to her appearance in posters that romanticized the war, as well as her inability to compete with The Statue of Liberty and Uncle Sam (Franke-Ruta 2013).

Looking at the photograph of Columbia in the tableau, even a century later, the viewer can understand instantly her importance. She stands central in the tableau, and her costume is much more elaborate than those who surround her. The stripes are reminiscent of the stripes on the flag, and are horizontal in order to draw the eye back to the wearer. The line that forms her arm is bold, straight, and strong, evoking a feeling of resolve in the viewer. However, most of all the gentle waves created by the robes she wears is godlike- and paired with the warlike armor and helmet, may be a reference to the Greek goddess Athena.

The reference to Athena is one that considerably strengthens the goal of the suffragists. Throughout history, Classical culture has been revered for its philosophy and politics. This ideal as manifested in the United States can be seen even at the root of American politics in the very architectural style of government buildings. Greece is known for its democratic politics, and thus government buildings done in the Classical style serve as a constant reminder of America's political origins. Athena, the patron goddess of the center of Greek thought Athens, was also the goddess of wisdom and military victory (Crane 2012). Clad in armor since birth, Athena was known for aiding Greek heroes as well as getting involved in the affairs

of Greeks and Greek gods alike (Crane 2012). However perhaps the most important aspect to Athena was the fact that she was a woman. Although she was the woman, she was the goddess of wisdom and war- qualities that people of the United States in 1913 would associate with men. The ability of the suffragists to utilize Columbia as Athena visually allows them to point out that a woman is capable of having wisdom, perhaps having the wisdom to make intelligent decisions regarding voting. Furthermore, a woman can also still be patriotic and supportive of her country. It is truly the combination of the two characters that gives this tableau its strength and powerful message for the onlookers.

The visual culture of the United States was important not only in the appearance of Columbia, but also as a pageant as a whole. The organizers of the parade intentionally made the floats and tableau as visually pleasing and accessible as possible to attract publicity for the movement. Photographers and journalists are the reason why this event lives on to be the single most heavily represented suffrage event in the prints and photograph's division of the Library of Congress 2001, with the march appearing for than forty times (Library of Congress 2001).



## Sub-Case Study 2: “The Dirty Pool of Politics”



“The Dirty Pool of Politics” from California Women and the Vote Collection

A uniqueness to the suffrage movement is that, unlike feminism in the later twentieth century, the main tactic was not to be seen as equals to men through sameness. Rather, women focused on the role as a caregiver, as one who brings moral sensibility to the home and now to the public sphere. In this sense women during the Suffrage Movement drew attention to women and men being complements, rather than drawing attention to conflict seen out of wrongful “complements.” While feminists did this in many different ways, a common one, like political issues then and now, was through cartoons.

Both suffragists and anti-suffragists alike utilized the political cartoon to further their goals. During the nineteenth century the daily newspaper became widely popular- and therefore the fastest and easiest way to reach the masses by the

early twentieth century. Interestingly, both sides appear to be concerned with women in their role as feminine homemakers. As a result, many pro-suffrage cartoons are themed on women being able to transition from being a feminine caregiver possessing a special moral skill set opposite of men within the home to outside of it, while anti-suffrage cartoons felt that this transition would cause the loss of these exact traits.

This cartoon is one of many examples of women taking on the duty of “social housekeeping.” It was used as a feminist postcard and widely circulated during the 1910s. It appeals to two arguments of the suffragists: the first being women being morally superior, while the other is their ability to conduct “social housekeeping” (National Women’s History Museum 2007). The ultimate goal of the creator is clear through both form and content. Due to the nature of the medium- a cartoon, the lack of color means that the work depends on the use of line. The demons on the left show movement through the winding lines creating lithe bodies. This generates the idea of something that is elusive but also perhaps disturbing. The woman on the right is a stark contrast. She is built to be solid shape that stands firm in the composition. Her vertical lines create order, and can be compared to the organic and unorganized lines on the left. As a result, the viewer sees disorder and order before the content is even evaluated. Now looking at the figure on the right, as an early twentieth century woman, she is displayed much differently than a contemporary woman would be. She is seen as feminine and modest, and acknowledges this. During this time, the role of women was very much in the home and out of the public eye. First wave feminism did not seek to change women’s roles, but rather

change where this role was applied. As such, the woman is using the ballot to change many moral issues in the country. She is not seen cleaning up economic policy, or international relations even though World War I is currently happening and the United States had just gotten out of the Spanish-American War (Library of Congress 2001). Instead of tackling these issues, the woman is seen “cleaning up” issues that are moral in nature. Women were assumed to be morally superior due to their exclusion in capitalism (National Women’s History Museum 2007). It is hypothesized that this comes directly out of the Gilded Age, a time of “robber barons” and corrupt officials. These were not events that involved women, and conversely women not stand for such immorality. Food adulteration is also in this vein, as women are the caregivers and therefore are protective over their children and what their children may consume in food. Because there is an outside issue that enters into the interior realm of the home, it is an issue that is within reason for women to want to tackle. Finally, there is “white slavery,” perhaps that is highly unknown to society today. This demon is associated with white women, and only white women, being taken across state lines and being forced into prostitution, or sex slavery. This was seen as a women’s issue, and the woman in the cartoon is fighting for other women who cannot speak for themselves.

This aspect to the cartoon stands out in particular because it demonstrates the long history that women have in fighting against sexual violence. Unfortunately, this seems to be a forgotten aspect of First Wave Feminism, as it is not common knowledge in today’s society. Yet it is cartoons and issues such as these that set up a legacy for feminism of the future. Interestingly, one hundred years later, this again is

a serious feminist and human rights issues. So while the culture in which we exist today is inherently different, women are still fighting for other women who are or have experienced oppression, specifically sexual violence. The topic of the woman's body and how it is used is a motif that will appear again and again in feminism over the latter part of the twentieth century.

### **Sub-Case Study 3: *Giver her the fruit of her hands***



*Give her the fruit of her hands from Buffalo Architecture and History by LaChiusa*

One of the most prominent visuals of this period was the poster “Give Her the Fruit of Her Hands” from 1905 by Evelyn Rumsey Cary (LaChiusa 2012). Created in Buffalo, New York, this piece features a woman emerging from the earth like a tree,

with either the White House or the Capitol building featured in the background.

What is most interesting about this piece is how the form and the content pull the piece in seemingly opposing directions, yet it was one of the most important visual representations of the suffrage movement.

The work was done in art nouveau style, popular for that time, and a style also utilized in other suffragist works. As such, the woman depicted is created through soft, gentle lines, giving her an ethereal glow that is a departure from the feminist assumptions of today. The colors used however make it instantly known to the viewer that this is art of the suffragist movement through the colors used. The American suffrage movement imported the British suffragist colors of purple, white, and green, and adjusted the use of the color green for the color gold (National Women's History Museum 2007). This tradition dates back to 1867 when Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony successfully campaigned to pass a referendum in Kansas for suffrage. Due to this victory, suffragists adopted the Kansas state flower- the sunflower, which is gold in color (National Women's History Museum 2007). As described in the *Justica* 1187, the sunflower was fitting "as it always turns its face to the light and follows the course of the sun, seemingly worshipping the archetype of righteousness" (National Women's History Museum 2007). Finally, the use of the color gold over time became associated with the Enlightenment, which already fits well with American tradition, and thus women had the ability to act as preservers and transmitters of culture (National Women's History Museum 2007).

By the early twentieth century, the color gold coupled with the phrase "Votes for Women" brought instant recognition. Thus, paired with the British colors of

violet and white, these three colors brought about an understanding of the content before fully engaging with the form.

Additionally, the lithe woman dressed in classical robes is also reminiscent of an angel, or herald, which was another popular symbol for the suffragist movement. While generally representations were more obvious, such as a figure with wings and a trumpet, it is nonetheless likely that the woman on the poster was a reference either consciously or unconsciously to this symbol. For Americans, these figures served as a reminder of the idealized Goddesses of Liberty and Justice, as well as of America and Columbia (National Women's History Museum 2007). The use of this type of figure has been present in formal and informal contexts since the formation of the Republic (National Women's History Museum 2007).

Therefore, a viewer immediately sees not just the woman and colors when first viewing this poster, but rather the layers of sociological history attached. Up until the latter twentieth century, when art became pluralistic, signs and signifiers were much more straightforward and more accessible to the public. This aspect of culture during the suffrage movement is perhaps its biggest strength in regards to visual representations. Artists knew that there was a visual vocabulary that when utilized, the public could understand.

Finally, there is one more interaction between the form and content that serves as the message of the poster. Once engaging the viewer through the colors and the Art Nouveau style, the viewer sees in gold lettering beneath the woman the quote "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates." This is in fact a Bible passage, Proverbs 31:31. However, it is the final verse of

a passage done in the format of an acrostic poem, originally using the Hebrew alphabet (The Holy Bible). This section, from lines ten to thirty-one, is titled “The Wife of Noble Character” (The Holy Bible). The section depicts the ideal woman in her role as wife. She works hard and well for her home, she is smart and shrewd in business, giving to the poor, wise and joyful, and God-fearing. Another translation of this final line states “Honor her for all that her hands have done/ and let her works bring her praise at the city gates” (The Holy Bible).

The use of the Bible passage demonstrates the fact that the artist believed that the appearance of the passage would be recognized and understood by others, which in turns stresses the importance of Christianity during this time period. Additionally, it connects to a theme that is found throughout the visual culture of the suffrage movement: the woman as feminine as perceived by men. The woman is clearly romanticized and even idealized, which appeals to the idea of the feminine as seen from the masculine point of view (National Women’s History Museum 2007). This seems to neutralize and soften the political goals of the poster. Paired with the Bible passage, it is a gentle way to ask for the vote.

## **Conclusion**

The most unique characteristic of the Suffrage Movement is how different its overall tactical choice differs from that of later feminist movements. This is a crucial aspect as tactics are more than just collective action- they must be done in a manner that the general public can understand (Larson 2013). They are embodiments and public displays of the collective identity (Larson 2013). As such the activists must

believe that their tactics are an appropriate expression of identity (Larson 2013). For the Suffrage Movement, the most successful and popular tactic was asking for the right to vote, not as equals as men in sameness, but because they felt that since women were different they could bring their own unique skill set to the public sphere. The view of the feminine was seen through the masculine perspective. Perhaps it was this exact tactic that set the United States up for Second Wave Feminism. When women earned the right to vote, this was not symbolic of gender equality in the way that may be popular to believe. This true inequality persisted until the issue of women as equals as men in their sameness comes to a head in the 1960s through the early 1980s.

Applying social movement theory to First Wave Feminism yields some interesting results. Looking at Blumer's five stages of social movements- agitation, esprit de corps, development of morale, formation of ideology, tactics- it is not difficult to see the discrepancy in the trajectory of the Suffrage Movement. As ideology changed somewhat dramatically at the turn of the twentieth century, the movement shifted back from tactics to the formation of ideology and then back to tactics without even truly realizing it. While the one true ideological goal- the vote for women- never changed, a lot of the periphery beliefs and objectives did. Moving on the Smelser's theory, it is as if the type of movement First Wave Feminism occupied shifted. Women's suffrage seems to have started as a norm-oriented social movement, which targeted the values and beliefs, but desired to alter the norms. And yet over time, because what women collectively wanted to do changed, it became almost comparable to Smelser's Theory on panic, "These types of reactions



attempt to escape from a stressful environment and focus on an immediate 'solution'- which is often not a solution at all" (Quinn 2015, 9). For women, the "solution" to their problems was the vote, with the hope that all of their true desires that are more norm and value oriented could be adjusted when they have the ability to vote and thus generate change.

The women framed this movement in terms of defining solutions rather than problems, and their visual expression reflects that desire. Rather than posing the lack of suffrage of problem, they state that the presence of suffrage would be a solution. This is also reflected in their visual culture. All of the sub-case studies show women as leaders in a solution for a better world for all, and by doing this they make the social movement much more attractive to outsiders. This is also important in the framing of the social movement, because the visual culture backed up by the ideology are not exclusive or alienating to the male-dominant society of this time. This is done in a few different ways.

Looking at the visual culture of twentieth century feminism, the relationship between the ideology of women's rights versus the acceptance of idealized femininity is clear. The first example, Columbia, reminded American culture that women could already be represented as the ideal voter- wise, strong, patriotic. Moving on to the latter two examples, it is clear that women utilize their position as different to men in their femininity to further their demand for the vote. Both women pictured in those visuals are idealized, ordered, clean, and womanly in the way the masculine would hope. They do not demand the vote, but rather ask politely. There is no evidence of challenging men in their position of power or the desire to

take over the public stage. Sociologically, this is important for the framing, as these visuals seem to almost defy the basic principles of feminism. Therefore, while First Wave Feminism is definitely a victory in women's rights, the visual culture of this social movement reveals that this movement is not all that meets the eye.

### **Chapter 4: Second Wave Feminism**

The “Modern Movement” of feminism, commonly known as Second Wave Feminism, ran roughly from the 1960s through the early 1980s. It can be bookended by two important events in feminism- the publishing of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 and the death of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1983. Second Wave Feminism came out of the legacy of first wave feminism and the Civil Rights Movement. As such, there is a focus on the more social and economic rights of women, something that was not as much of a success during the Suffrage Movement in addition to something that was fought for African-Americans. Second Wave Feminism is unique in comparison to other waves of feminism in that it is the reclamation of the status of women by women- be it through their role in the home or workplace, in the public or private spheres.

As previously stated, while we utilize the term “waves” of feminism, activity never really goes away. This means that nineteenth century and early twentieth century feminism had not ever completely disappeared (Banks 1981). The veterans of the Suffrage Movement were still around at the beginning of Second Wave Feminism, and in actuality had never stopped fighting for equal rights even after women’s suffrage was achieved (Banks 1981). The embodied hallmark of Second Wave Feminism, the Equal Rights Amendment, dates back to a much earlier time in 1923 coming out of the Woman’s Party that was founded by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns (Banks 1981). Every single year from that year onward, these women placed pressure on Congress to end gender discrimination in areas such as work, marriage, divorce, property, and jury service (Banks 1981). Interestingly, most other women’s

groups opposed the Equal Rights Amendment until the 1960s, a full forty years after its founding. Yet why did it take so long, and what is this change attributed to?

Welfare feminists from between First and Second Wave Feminism felt that the Equal Rights Amendment only served a very small demographic, the career women who were looking out for their own interests (Banks 1981). However, by the 1960s, this was no longer true for three specific reasons. The first is that there was a dramatic change in how women participated in the labor force- increasingly, women were in non-manual jobs, coupled with a higher amount of women achieving higher education, yet also at the same time there were proportionately less professional women (Banks 1981). The second piggybacks off of the first in that it is related to the educational attainment of women. After the Baby Boom began to decline, women were starting to become more independent in their own right: through education, having less children, and marrying later, and needed legislation to match this shift in how women saw themselves (Banks 1981). Finally, these women were being pushed into workforce. The acute shortage of manpower during the 1960s made both politicians and employers look for ways to make employment more attractive to women (Banks 1981).

On the executive level, President John F. Kennedy set up the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women in 1961. Headed by Eleanor Roosevelt, this commission appeared to be concerned with women and their standing in society, however others pointed out that its more likely purpose was to actually block the Equal Rights Amendment by making concessions to gender equality (Banks 1981 & Tobias 1997). Following in 1963, the same year as Betty Friedan's blockbuster book

*The Feminine Mystique* hit bookshelves, the Commission published a report demanding the following: equal pay for comparable work, child care services, and paid maternity leave (Baxandal and Gordon 2000).

Both this event and the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are credited with becoming the foundation by which the National Organization of Women (NOW) was founded (Tobias 1997). The report by the Presidential Commission of the Status of Women stimulated the creation of state women's commissions, however for the feminists it was a potentially mythic addition to the Civil Rights Act that was the spark for the fire. According to an urban legend, in the Civil Rights Act, a Southern senator placed the word "sex" into the bill, hoping that it would kill the bill and thus setting back racial equality (Banks 1981). Instead, it had been passed and women were accidentally included in the brief (Banks 1981). While this story may or may not be true, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission still refused to enforce the law in regards to the rights of women, and thus NOW was formed as a reaction to this refusal (Banks 1981).

The National Organization of Women, founded in 1966, continually places pressure on the Commission and enforcement agencies (Banks 1981). Like the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) of First Wave Feminism, NOW focused on gentle but persistent pressure on legislators. The founding of NOW was followed by the creation of several other women's groups, notably The Women's Equity Action League (1968) which was meant for professional women, and The National Women's Political Caucus (1971), formed in an effort to have more women run for political office (Banks 1981). Under the leadership of NOW in its

dedication to the Equal Rights Amendment, The Women's Bureau, which had been against the ERA since the 1920s, officially supported the bill.

Yet not all those partaking in the revival of the feminist tradition were supporters of the National Organization of Women. In conjunction with the feminists fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment, there was the rising of the radical feminist movement. This movement arose so quickly that scholars have difficulties assigning a chronology to it (Baxandal and Gordon 2000). These were the women that "the personal is political" mantra came out of. Particularly, the radical feminists were interested in conscious-raising, which upon examination is a more extreme form of basic sociology, that is, possessing a sociological imagination (Tobias 1997). These women did this with a more specific goal in mind, "Women came to understand that many of their 'personal' problems- insecurity about appearance and intelligence, exhaustion, conflicts with husbands and male employers- were not individual failings but a result of discrimination" (Baxandal and Gordon 2000, 3). From this basic theory stemmed thousands of opinions on a variety of topics. Socialist feminists weighed the issues of gender and class equally, while Marxist feminists saw women as the proletariat and men as the bourgeoisie (Baxandal and Gordon 2000). These groups tended to form a bit more organically than those concerned solely with the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment, starting out being multi-issued and then eventually narrowing down to one issue (Baxandal and Gordon 2000). Unique to the radical feminist movement, perhaps due to their conscious-raising, was their dedication to the dissemination of information through print- the best media option for that time (Baxandal and Gordon 2000).

This began with a few feminist publishing and printing houses, but by the mid 1970s over 500 feminist newspapers and magazines were scattered across the country (Baxandal and Gordon 2000).

So throughout all of the picketing and yelling and meetings, what did Second Wave Feminism accomplish? Although the Equal Rights Amendment failed in 1982, it only lost the two-thirds vote by three states (Baxandal and Gordon 2000). Even a cursory examination reveals that very few areas of life in the United States were left untouched by feminism (Baxandal and Gordon 2000). Overall, there was a general shift in values and norms across the country in how men view women and how women viewed themselves. Americans became self-conscious about using the word “he” when referencing a human being, or the word “mankind” (Baxandal and Gordon 2000). These are shifts in norms that were not often questioned before this time. Even down to the way one dressed- 1970s feminists supported not wearing makeup, high heels or short skirts (Baxandal and Gordon 2000). This was met by backlash in the 1980s by younger women who found the feminist beauty standards repressive (Baxandal and Gordon 2000). Yet this interaction alone marks a wonderful progress for women- that they have the freedom to choose how to dress themselves, be it more feminine and showy or conservative. There were strides in women’s education as more and more private institutions opened their doors to women. Additionally, once these women were on the campus, the passing of Title IX protected them (Baxandal and Gordon 2000 & Tobias 1997). On the legislation and jurisprudence side, radical feminists aided toward the legalization of abortion in 1973, guidelines against coercive sterilization, and rape shield laws so that women

will be more apt to prosecute their offenders, and affirmative action programs nationwide (Baxandal and Gordon 2000).

### **The Visual Culture of Second Wave Feminism**

When researching the visual culture of Second Wave Feminism, one looks for opportunities for women to call attention to their cause. This call for attention expected to occur in the public sphere, in order to draw the most attention from bystanders and pull the ambivalent public into the realm of the social movement. Two major protest events were put on by women during this time- the protest of the 1968 Miss America contest, and the Women's Strike of 1970. Interestingly, the Women's Strike of 1970 is reminiscent of the Women's March of 1913, and thus begs to be given a closer look. Surprisingly, little scholarly information can be found on the visual aspects of this topic.

At the fourth annual meeting of the National Organization for Women (NOW), Betty Friedan presented the idea of the strike to her collaborators (Bazelon 2006). NOW was hesitant to hold the strike, as its leaders were sure that it would not be a success (Bazelon 2006). It was organized by thirty women in June of 1970, who set it for after the work day ended on August 26, 1970- the fiftieth anniversary of women's suffrage. A Ms. Magazine article- a notable feminist publication- tells that this request for the march came with a NOW membership of only 3,033 members and an annual budget of \$38,000 (Dismore 2010). It was set to be on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York City, restricted to one lane because the planners felt that not enough supporters would arrive to block the entire street (Dismore 2010). The



march turned out to be a much greater success than intended- if one reads the Associated Press article from the evening news of August 27, 1970, it becomes apparent that perhaps the strike needed both lanes. Police estimated that about 20,000 people attended the strike, with more generous estimates stating there were 50,000 (Associated Press 1970). This strike proved to be vital for Second Wave Feminism, with the unification of several different women's groups, from the conservative to the more liberal and even radical marching together for an equal opportunity in work and education, a right to medical help with abortion, and free twenty-four hour a day childcare (Bazelon 2006). While these demands were ambitious then, and remain so today, the strike demonstrated visually the strength of Second Wave Feminism. The strike received coverage from major print sources, such as *Time* magazine, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Chicago Tribune* (Dow 2014).

When thinking about the visual culture of this event, while there is not exhaustive literature on the signs and symbols themselves, it becomes obvious that the visual was incredibly important when thinking about framing the protest. As stressed by Bonnie Dow, author of *Watching Women's Liberation, 1970: Feminism's Pivotal Year on the Network News*, the strike was a "public, observable event- with the possibility of producing compelling images, it was deviant (such huge demonstrations by women were unusual), it had the potential for conflict (feminist versus antifeminists); and it could be linked to issues already on the media agenda (such as the abortion law repeal, Title VII enforcement, the ERA)" (Dow 2014, 149). Furthermore, "the strike coverage relied on cultural associations of women with

visual pleasure in three respects: through its positions of the strike as a sheer spectacle; through its verbal and visual framing of the strike as entertainment rather than reasoned protest; and through its emphasis on the issue of feminism under attack, a focus within which femininity was largely represented by women's bodies" (Dow 2014, 151). The fact that the women of this protest utilized their bodies for protest consciously is a hallmark of Second Wave Feminism. Examining the photographs of the event, one can see that these women often linked their arms during the strike. This is a sign that is universal throughout our culture for unity. Women of different class, races, and political outlooks joined together- and in effect create a very powerful image. In conjunction with different phrases on pickets women held, there is a prevalence of the Venus symbol, known in our culture as the sign for female. However these symbols were often manipulated in certain ways- some featured the equal symbol in the middle, while others featured the raised fist. It is difficult to know the origins of these symbols in Second Wave Feminism, as there is a lack of literature, however what they desire to convey to their audience is clear, as well as distinct from each other. The Venus symbol with the equal sign probably represents the aspiration for equality amongst the genders, but could also be interpreted as the presence of equality amongst women in their status as a woman. The raised fist in the middle of the Venus sign is a little more obvious. The use of the raised fist dates back in the United States to 1917 in a propaganda cartoon published by the Industrial Workers of the World, an American trade union (Kelly 2012). Since then, it had been adopted by the anti-fascists in the Spanish Civil War of 1936, Social International in the United Kingdom, and the Black Power Movement in

the United States (Kelly 2012). British psychologist Oliver James believes the raised fist to be a powerful symbol “because it encapsulates connotations of resistance, solidarity, pride, and militancy in one simple gesture” (Kelly 2012). For Second Wave Feminism, it is thus not difficult to see where the raised fist fits in to its visual culture. Women wanted to show the world, using two well known symbols of that time, that women were uniting in their commonality of the feminine, and fighting in solidarity against discrimination. For feminists, this symbol came to represent political struggle and unification against that struggle, and came to use for women’s liberationists about the time of the Miss America Protest of 1968 (Kelly 2012).

The Miss America Protest of 1968 was an event that existed under much different pretexts than the later Women’s Strike of 1970. The most defining difference of this protest that instead of being organized by the more moderate and politically minded NOW, it was organized by a radical women’s liberation group- meaning that the goals of this protest were going to be more norm-oriented from Smelser’s Theory. It was organized by the New York Radical Women- a group of women that had been active in the anti-war demonstrations and the Civil Rights Movement (Dow 2014). These women were existing in a time of great upheaval, for 1968 was filled with the deaths of both Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and also within many different movements: the feminist movement, the antiwar movement, the civil rights movement, and the queer rights movement (Dow 2014). On the day of the Miss America contest, September 7, 1968, about 400 protesters gathered on the boardwalk near the pageant in Atlantic City (Dow 2014). At the center of the protest was the “freedom trash can” (Dow 2014). In this bin women

placed objects of their oppression and discrimination, such as wigs, curlers, false eyelashes, dish detergent, copies of *Playboy* and *Ladies Home Journal*, high heels, and bras- although contrary to popular belief the contents of the bin was not set on fire (Dow 2014). One can see the vast difference in framing and resource mobilization that these two events used. While the Women's Strike of 1970 sought to engage women with each other while (indirectly) fighting for legislation (this came out of a compromise between radical feminists and NOW), the Miss America Protest of 1968 is clearly an attack on social values and norms. As one of the leading organizers, writer and editor Robin Morgan condemned the "ludicrous 'beauty' standards we ourselves are conditioned to take seriously" and "the unbeatable Madonna-whore combination" - where women are expected to act sexy but not too sexy, demure but not too demure, etcetera (Dow 2014, 32). So visually, somewhat reminiscent of the radical feminists of First Wave Feminism, these feminists created a visual culture that was militant and combative, as well as somewhat shocking yet educational to the viewer. For someone who may have been one of the 600 bystanders, to see all of the ways that women are controlled by society- from their assumed role as mothers, while also maintain themselves for what artists dubbed the "male gaze," there were many ways that women of this time were still oppressed. Thus, the challenging of the norms is important as it aided in the way women were see and viewed. Yet the drive for women was not seen just on the political or social scene amongst activists.

What is unique to Second Wave Feminism is the fact that the fine arts were experiencing their own feminist movement. It is possible that the outpouring of feminist art has affected the way scholars have documented Second Wave

Feminism. This movement emerged parallel to Second Wave Feminism, albeit later in the 1960s as it was probably in part a reaction to the feminism that was rising up. It emerged in the late 1960s in the midst of demonstrations that were anti-war, as well as civil and queer rights movements (DiTolla 2014). It was a perfect time for the avant-garde due to the culture of opposition set up during the 1960s (Taylor 1995). This movement was a compilation of artists, curators, critics, and art historians, and officially burst onto the arts scene in the early 1970s (Brodsky and Olin 2008). The materialization of feminist art officially in the art world may be owed in part to Linda Nochlin's 1971 publication, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" In this piece, Nochlin asserts that because the greatness of women artists have always been under the definition of mastery as defined by males for males, she believes it is amazing that women have achieved as much as they have (Nochlin 1971). However, this idea that women were seen through the eyes of men was something that in particular changed during this wave of feminism.

Between 1970 and 1985 there was a shift in how women artists engaged with themselves, each other, and the rest of the world. In the beginning of the aggregation of feminist artists, there was a focus on political strategies that came out of a set of practices, and is marked by an engagement with debate and discourse around representation and modernism (Deepwell 1995). However over time there is a change to a focus on the association of women artists to work together to exhibit their work, to support and encourage each other's activities or to protest against discrimination in the art world (Deepwell 1995).

Similar to the protests and other visually engaging feminist tactics of Second Wave Feminism, most mainstream and canonical art history texts barely touch upon this topic (Brodsky and Olin 2008). However, thanks to feminist art historians, the legacy of this movement lives on. These feminist artists were inspired by the somewhat utopian ideals of the early twentieth century modernist art movement (DiTolla 2014). They desired social change, particularly in the following ways: intervening in the established art world through their art, becoming a part of the art historical canon, and finally affecting everyday social actions (DiTolla 2014). Reviewing these three objectives, it is interesting to see how sociological in nature they are- women artists wanted to exist within the culture of the art world, and how that art world can affect parts of society beyond it. At that time, they were not, similar to women being excluded from education and the workforce. As stated by Suzanne Lacy, a leader in the feminist art movement, the goal of feminist art was to “influence cultural attitudes and transform stereotypes” (DiTolla 2014). Oddly, the goals of the feminist art movement of Second Wave Feminism are less akin to a traditional art movement, but rather a social movement placed within the context of fine art. There was no single medium to unite these feminist artists, but they often used conceptual art, body art, video art, with the aim to create spaces that previously did not exist for women and minority artists (DiTolla 2014). Before this movement, women were largely excluded from exhibitions and gallery representations solely due to the fact that they were women, and thus made these alternative spaces out of necessity (DiTolla 2014). Yet it seems that in making these spaces, women were also protesting the spaces that they had been denied from, and

taking the life of their art into their own hands, which only adds to the idea that the feminist art movement was really a social movement.

Characteristics of feminist art include the aspiration of feminist artists to create a dialogue between the viewer and the artwork through the inclusion of women's perspective (DiTolla 2014). In effect, feminist art was not just about the aesthetics, but also about the social and political landscape in which they exists. Finally, these women, like their political activist counterparts, sought to reclaim the identity of being a woman. They often did this by often using a variety of alternative media for their art- mediums that were restricted to women in the past such as fabric and fiber, as well as performance and video (DiTolla 2014). These feminist artists used these mediums to devise "innovative representational strategies to challenge phallogentrism and the male gaze, illuminate female sexuality and eroticism, critique visual economies that limit women to heterosexual and maternal identities, and celebrate modes of existence that transcend patriarchy and white supremacy" (Brodsky and Olin 2008, 329). These ideas realized, as feminist art critic Lucy Lippard identifies, a more generalized range of female signs and signifiers as seen through motifs and imagery, "a unifying density, an overall texture, often sensuously tactile and often repetitive to the point of obsession; the preponderance of circular forms and central focus;... linear bag; layers... flexibility of handling; pinks and pastels" (Taylor 1995, 98).

When looking at distinct examples of feminist art, it is evident that they straddle both an art movement as well as a social movement. These works often are present in public spaces, inviting others to look and challenge themselves and their

thoughts on the status of women visually. There is a spectrum so to speak, with protest utilizing art on one side, and fine art that would appear in a gallery on the other. Examples of each of these, plus a more moderate example discussed below reveal the nature of the fine arts as they were in Second Wave Feminism.

### **Sub- Case Studies**

#### **Sub- Case Study 1: *In Mourning and In Rage***



*In Mourning and In Rage* from ARTStor

One example of art collaborating with protest is Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz-Starus' "In Mourning and in Rage." This was a part protest, part performance piece that occurred on the front steps of the Los Angeles City Hall on December 13, 1977 (Lacy and Labowitz-Straus 1978). Los Angeles was the epicenter of the feminist art movement, with the feminist art school run by Judy



Chicago not too far away. The performance was a response to the media coverage, seen as inadequate by its participants, on “The Hillside Strangler”- a serial killer who had strangled and killed ten women in that past month (Lacy and Labowitz-Straus 1978). However the event was also meant to draw attention to violence against women in general, to raise questions about it through the community-oriented artistic activists that had emerged (Lacy and Labowitz-Straus 1978).

Suzanne Lacy’s own personal website describes the events that led to the inspiration to this protest performance. She describes how this serial killer strangled and killed those ten women, and dumped their bodies on the side of the road (Lacy). The media sensationalized the victims, only adding to the fear, and to Lacy’s disapproval, “In spite of a growing body of literature on the politics of crimes against women, stories focused instead on the randomness of the violence” (Lacy). She and Leslie Labowitz-Straus organized a motorcade of sixty women who followed a hearse to City Hall, where media reporters waited as alerted by Lacy and Labowitz-Straus (Lacy). From the car emerged ten women- nine robed head to toe in black and one in red, their identities concealed (Lacy). On the front steps of City Hall, the performers each spoke of a different form of violence against women- acknowledging the social consent of these crimes with a banner with the words “In Memory of Our Sisters, Women Fight Back” near them (Lacy; Lacy and Labowitz-Straus 1978). As each woman stepped forward and said their statement, the woman in red put a red scarf around her (Lacy and Labowitz-Straus 1978). Lacy and Labowitz-Straus were incredibly straightforward with onlookers about their purpose, stating in the transcript of the event “We are here because we want you to

know that these ten women are not isolated cases of random, unexplainable violence” (Lacy and Labowitz-Straus 1978, 54). These women were bringing to light the norm to hide away ugly aspects of society. After, the other women from the motorcade shouted, “In memory of our sisters, we fight back!” (Lacy).

The aftermath of the event was positive, with City Council members voicing support of the performance piece to the press, as well as the Rape Hotline Alliance pledging to start self-defense classes (Lacy).

Examining this event visually is important because it is simultaneously shows the social movement putting on public events, but also incorporating elements of fine arts in the event as well. The women dressed in black are to represent the women that were killed. The viewer understands that this is done in mourning for the women, as black is our culture’s color for death and funerals. The contrast between the black and the red of the final woman gives the viewer a more complex story- as black and red together creates a sinister coupling. The red we associate with passion, but also with aggression, and even our own bodies with the association to blood. Thus, it visually translates the emotions of the piece- in mourning, black, and in rage, red, to the viewer.

This protest is a great example of the artists becoming involved in the social movement, and the blurring of the lines between art and protest using art for resource mobilization. Yet Lacy and Labowitz-Straus are not unique in their status as artist-activists. As Los Angeles was the heart for the feminist art movement, there were also examples of fine art involved in the more social movement aspects to Second Wave Feminism.

## Sub-Case Study 2: *Maps from Three Weeks in May*



*Maps* from ARTStor

In addition to *In Mourning and In Rage*, Suzanne Lacy also headed another art activism project in Los Angeles that was focused on the anti-rape movement. Done in 1977, this piece in particular was aimed at establishing her Genre Public Art, meant to combine activism, education, and theory (Fryd 2007). *Three Weeks in May* was a compilation of events, performance pieces, and various different installations that often encouraged participant engagement (Fryd 2007).

One installation in particular was titled *Maps*. This work featured two large municipal maps of the Los Angeles area, both maps six feet tall by twenty-five feet wide (Fryd 2007). They were placed on the City Mall Plaza in downtown Los Angeles, just outside City Hall (Fryd 2007). Both maps were used to demonstrate the rampant issue of sexual violence against women, despite current efforts of the time to combat it.

Every day from May 8-28, 1977, Lacy went to the Los Angeles Police Department and collected the rape and attempted rape statistics that came from the police reports of the previous day (Lacy 1977). She then stenciled in "RAPE" in four-inch high red letters on the map at the location at which the assault occurred (Fryd 2007). Surrounding this, Lacy would stencil in "RAPE" nine times in fainter markings, to symbolize that one out of every nine rapes were estimated to be reported (Fryd 2007). On the opposing map were centers of assistance and resistance to the problem, in order to counteract suggestions of "continuous victimization," and featured places such as prevention centers, rape hotlines, hospital emergency rooms, and crisis counseling centers (Fryd 2007, 29).

By the end of the three weeks, the map was covered in red markings, both faint and more pronounced. Within in just that amount of time, there were eighty-six rapes and attempted rapes in the Los Angeles area, which averages to about five per day (Lacy 1977). Lacy states that this number alone does not tell us much, nor to a certain extent do the maps: "The maps do not show you where to go and where not to go, what to do and what not to do. The truth is that no place is safe" (Lacy 1977, 67). She goes on to clarify the stories behind the numbers, admitting that seventeen of the incidents were hitchhiking related, but then countering that twenty-one of the cases occurred in the victims' own beds (Lacy 1977).

There were a few goals of Lacy's team for this project. The first two come from Lacy's belief that "artists should 'restructure visual reality' by disrupting the flow of image and demystifying image making, helping the mass audience to understand media's impact on their lives and identities" (Fryd 2007, 33). Both of

these beliefs are visible in *Maps*. The installation was placed in the middle of a public space so that the two large maps interrupted one's normal flow of vision across the mall. Additionally, the image-making process was slow and deliberate, so that the public could see each day as it changed. Employing these two techniques, Lacy hoped to use feminist art as a way to expose, and end, the rape of women by engaging the viewers and art makers alike into participants (Lacy 1977). She felt that this engagement will lead to women becoming more aware of their vulnerability, sisterhood among women, and that together women could fight back together against the oppression from men (Lacy 1977).

Lacy knew that her feminist activist art was centered on the activities and violence against solely women, and the possibility that men could have trouble identifying with *Maps*. Responding to this concern, Lacy stated, "Putting the consciousness into one's art means that this art will reflect a point of view which might at first be unrecognizable to the dominant male culture, since it is foreign to it" (Lacy 1977, 70). She does not offer a remedy for this situation, and it is possible that to her the lack of a remedy may be the point, to make men conscious of the impossibility for them to understand how women interact with the world around them.

Lacy's *Maps* from *Three Weeks in May* is a good example of Second Wave Feminism activist art because it demonstrates the desire to disrupt public space in order to educate would-be participants. In the spirit of conscious-raising, popular during the Second Wave, it is clear that Lacy's team wants to promote social change by educating the public the injustices that are surrounding them as they go about

their lives. Visual cues from this piece are relatively simple, maximizing the legibility for viewers. The bright red lettering, as seen in her *In Mourning and In Rage*, reminds one of aggression, especially when paired with the word "RAPE." Placing the maps together allow a comparison within the map that noted the rape cases, but also between the two maps. As the days passed and the one map slowly turned more and more red, a viewer could note that truly everywhere in Los Angeles was dangerous, and no woman was safe. Comparing that map to the map with the centers of treatment and prevention allowed for viewers to see that despite the help available, rape was still a systemic societal problem that needed to be addressed.

### **Sub-Case Study 3: *Womanhouse* and *The Linen Closet***



*The Linen Closet* from ARTStor

While Lacy was known for her public art pieces, she was not alone in her endeavor: Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro are among these other artists. Both

well-known artists in their own right, Chicago and Shapiro are members of the canon of Feminist Art History. These two collaborated with their students from the feminist fine arts school that they ran, and created perhaps the best known work from this period- *Womanhouse*. In autumn 1971, the Feminist Art Program from California Institute of the Arts had twenty-five students and was in the midst of planning its first project, *Womanhouse*, suggested by art historian Paula Harper (Subrosa 2014). The project had three goals for its students: to confront the inner struggles of being a woman by working through a project rather than through conscious-raising, and to develop skills while also simultaneously working collaboratively, and finally to challenge their role as a woman and as an artist (Subrosa 2014). The project through which the students were doing this was to refit an old abandoned house and create a fantasy land that comes out of home-making (Subrosa 2014). This fantasy would focus specifically on the way women would spend their lives cooking, baking, washing, folding, ironing, sewing “their lives away” (Subrosa 2014). This reflects a consciousness that first arose during the late 1960s, and was fully realized in the 1970s, of the daily practice of women and how it differs to that of other members of society (Gerhard 2011). *Womanhouse* in particular seeks to identify this conscious and to manifest it using “this very female vocabulary to create a kind of art that has not been created by men” (Gerhard 2011, 599).

The house that was used for the project was in a residential area in Hollywood, and needed extensive reconstruction before the women could go forward with their plans for their installation (Subrosa 2014). This proved to be the

most difficult part of the project, as it was winter and the house had no heating, plumbing, or hot water and they were all unfamiliar with how to go about renovations (Subrosa 2014). However, this aspect of *Womanhouse* also proves to be incredibly important to the project as it demonstrates the abilities of women when they are given the opportunity.

Each room in the house featured work done by a different artist and commented on the status and roles of women. There was the “Nurturing Kitchen,” where the kitchen walls were covered in sculpture that transitioned from eggs to breasts, and was meant to comment on the role of women as nurturer. There was “The Bridal Staircase,” which had a mannequin in bridal attire preparing to descend the staircase, and “the bride’s failure to look clearly where she is going” (Gerhard 2011, 598). There was Judy Chicago’s controversial “Menstruation Bathroom,” focused on women and their coping role as reproductive beings through menstruation. Each of the rooms was unique as it was done by a different artist, and demonstrated each artist’s particular experience and thoughts on womanhood.

It was opened from January 30 to February 28, 1972 (Subrosa 2014). On opening day alone, there were 4,000 attendees, and over 10,000 came during the following month the exhibition was open (Gerhard 2011).

Following this project, Miriam Schapiro wrote an article titled “Recalling *Womanhouse*” in 1987, which was a retrospective of the exhibit through her eyes. She found *Womanhouse* to be important because it featured collaboration- because female art students could engage with other female art students and their intersectionality could aid in the development of both people (Schapiro 1987).



Interestingly, Schapiro unknowingly engages with the more sociological experience of art when referencing her students, “They did not, however, have much skill or technique in implementing their ideas, nor did they know anything about the culture of art” and “They had brilliant ideas but no way to contextualize them, which is why the archetypal house form worked so well for us at Cal Arts” (Schapiro 1987, 26). Both of these statements seem to reference an understanding that in order to express oneself through visuals accurately, one must be able to translate thought and emotions into visuals that the viewer can understand. As such, there is an understanding that there is a visual vocabulary within our society that allows us to transmit ideas. Schapiro remembers that the group was not confident as to how men would take to this space for women, perhaps due to the utilization of a feminine vocabulary as mentioned by Gerhard (Schapiro 1987). While the *Womanhouse* website shows the role of women as home-makers as ‘wasting away the lives of women,’ Schapiro’s thoughts on the project was instead the validation of all women as contributors to society, even in their role as homemakers (Schapiro 1987). Finally, Schapiro reveals a tenet of feminist art- that the work needed to address issues that people cared about in a way that people can understand to produce social change (Schapiro 1987). This assertion demonstrates the link between the feminist art movement and the feminist social movement, and how in actuality, there is much less distinction between the two.

One of the works from *Womanhouse* that well encompasses the ideals of both the project and feminist art during this time in general is “Linen Closet” by Sandy Orgel. This work speaks to both women as homemakers and also as objects of the

“male gaze.” The work featured a linen closet with perfectly folded sheets, and a mannequin emerging from within the inside of the closet. A statement from the artist reveals much about her own personal engagement with the piece, as well as how it interacted with the audience, “As one woman visitor to my room commented ‘This is exactly where women have always been- in between the sheets and on the shelf.’ It is now time to come out of the closet” (Subrosa 2014). The use of the done-up mannequin suggests the idealized woman that all women must live up to, and in turn to have that ideal woman appreciated by men. The folded sheets indicates women in their role as a sexual being for men, as suggested by the onlooker, and also the expectation of their role as mother and caretaker of the home. The interaction between the sheets and the idealized woman connotes a “1950s housewife” identity where a woman is expected to be connected to an amazing mother, wife, and homemaker, but also be as close to the idealized beauty of that time as possible. The shelves cutting across the mannequin remind us of the bars in a prison perhaps, keeping the woman trapped in her role. Yet as Orgel tells us, “It is time to come out of the closet,” meaning that the emergence of the woman as seen by an extended arm and leg demonstrates the will for women to leave behind the “prison” of the “1950s housewife.” This work is just one example of the powerful works seen in *Womanhouse*, and shows how each work reveals a different part of the woman experience.

#### Honorary Sub-Case Study 4: *Anatomy of a Kimono*



*Anatomy of a Kimono* from ARTStor

Furthest from the protest art and installation art on the other end of the spectrum toward a more strictly fine art lies Miriam Schapiro's work. While not an official part of the social movement, this Schapiro's work along with many other women artists shows the extent to which feminism invaded art. Schapiro, one of the instructors from *Womanhouse*, had an established career as an artist as well as a feminist artist before her collaboration with Chicago. She challenged the dichotomy of "high art," which denoted works of known, usually male, artists, and "decorative art," which was a word then used to relegate women and folk artists into anonymity (National Museum of Women in the Arts 2014). It is documented that her defining breakthrough as an artist was in 1972 with her work on *Womanhouse*, and that in the following years, Schapiro developed a link to "a visual language that seeks to recover and elevate the work of women artisans of the past" and used mediums such as quilting, embroidery, and applique (National Museum of Women in the Arts

2014). This combining of high arts collage and works created by anonymous women became known as “femmage.” Schapiro remembers the first femmage from 1972, where she had put fabric on a canvas and immediately panicked because she had never done that before, which she now attributes it to the invisible man standing over her telling her no (Gouma-Peterson 1999). The Brooklyn Museum defines femmage as stated in Schapiro’s Artist Statement: 1. It is work by a woman 2. The activities of saving and collecting are important ingredients 3. Scraps are essential to the process and are recycled in the work 4. The theme has a woman-life context 5. The work has elements of covert imagery 6. The theme of the work addresses itself to an audience of intimates 7. It celebrates a private or public event 8. A diarist’s point of view is reflected in the work 9. There is drawing and/or handwriting sewn in the work 10. It contains silhouetted images that are fixed on material 11. Recognizable images appear in narrative sequence. 12. Abstract forms create a pattern. 13. The work contains photographs or other printed matter. 14. The work has a functional as well as an aesthetic life.

The idea of the femmage is important to feminist art, particularly the feminist art movement and the social movement because it entails reclaiming being a woman. Like the women who challenged the “male gaze,” or rejected the destiny of being a housewife, femmage acknowledges women and what they do and state how it has contributed to the world- and utilizing this method on their own terms. Schapiro’s relationship with femmage is special because it allowed her to explore her identity as a woman and an artist: “For me the fabric of my art and the fabric of my life equate each other”- 1976 (Gouma-Peterson 1999, 12). She utilized not only

a medium that is of women, but also used motifs throughout her various works that referenced women- a cabinet, apron, kimono, vesture, heart, house, and the fan (Gouma-Peterson 1999). Her most celebrated work is “Anatomy of a Kimono,” from the Kimono Series that ran from 1976 to 1979 (Gouma-Peterson 1999). This series comes from Schapiro’s life long love of costumes from when she was a little girl to her more analytical approach to costume by the early 1970s (Gouma-Peterson 1999). She especially wanted to “break the code” of these costume to determine the emotional and intellectual message of them (Gouma-Peterson 1999). The lack of a person donning the kimonos was done to evoke a sense of both absence and presence- that presence being the women who made the gowns but were left out of official culture (Gouma-Peterson 1999).

“Anatomy of a Kimono” is unlike her other static pieces from her kimono series because there is a suggestion of human action (Gouma-Peterson 1999). Referencing Edo era Japan and its traditional women’s art, this piece also features a Japanese motif known as a “kick” repeated four times, as if suggesting a figure walking toward the future (Gouma-Peterson 1999). This piece is an example of the beautiful but also meaningful work that came out of Schapiro’s femmage period. The movement seen throughout the piece lends the eye to sweep in and out, and the bright colors and patterns lend itself to a feminine and bright personality. The repurposing of traditional craft also demonstrates to the viewer the truly artistic side to decorative arts. Finally, this piece shows how the feminist social movement of the 1960s and 1970s pervaded into even the highest forms of art. This piece is not

an activism piece, it would not be seen in a public space, yet it still has a point of reference in the social movement.

## **Conclusion**

Second Wave Feminism sought to change the values, norms, and beliefs of our society, while also securing those changes by passing legislation. This social movement also interestingly experienced an intersection with the art movement of that time. And while it was an art movement, many if not most of the goals were sociological in nature. Oddly, at least while looking back in history, it appears that the visual culture of feminism existed more within the art movement than outside of it. These women artists sought not only to create art that described the feminine experience, but also to use their art to generate social change.

Second Wave Feminism is also a good example of the newly emerged New Social Movement that was determined to arise in mid-twentieth century. This New Social Movement can be best understood through the importance of culture: the operationalization of the norms, values, and beliefs. Because Second Wave Feminism occurs at the beginning of the creation of the New Social Movement, it does not exactly flesh out all of the characteristics, although some are definitely visible:

1. They engage civil society or the cultural sphere as an arena for collective action by emphasizing symbolic action: Lacy's demonstration, the Strike of 1970 or the Miss America of 1968 Protest are all examples of how activists utilized both a disruption of public space and actions that carry a greater meaning.

2. Promote autonomy and self determination instead of attempting to maximize power and influence: This aspect does not apply as much to Second Wave Feminism, which occurred during the infancy of New Social Movements. While women wanted to experience self-realization, but they also wanted to exert this self-realization over their oppressors- men.
3. Rather than take part in conflicts over material resources, new social movements tend to be concerned with non-material social problems: This movement entailed both, as women wanted access to jobs and other opportunities equally, but their visual culture references a desire to be treated equally due to a change in culture about thinking about women.
4. Problematize the process of construction of collective identities and identifying group interest: Second Wave Feminism experienced quick mobilization, but the women broke down the process of group interest into a single common goal, the Equal Rights Amendment. This demonstrates that this wave of feminism sought to conceptualize and operationalize their collective identity and group interest into something that can be understood by outsiders in a tangible form.
5. Stresses the socially constructed nature of grievances and ideology: This is perhaps the most important to Second Wave Feminism, as women felt that their oppression was a social construct that needs to be dismantled. This can also be seen through examples of activism against sexual violence against women, because women point out that this acceptance (through the lack of

action) of the acts of aggression against women is something that is a social construct.

6. Recognize the variety of latent and underground networks rather than give all credit to centralized organizations: Second Wave Feminism also follows this aspect only about half-way. While there were coalitions that had their own specialized topics, most of the political credit was given to larger organizations, such as NOW.

Other social movement theories apply to Second Wave Feminism, such as Blumer's which focuses on each step of development. There was a period of agitation, as best expressed through Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which can be seen as the official start of the Second Wave. It also provides somewhat of a trigger event for the formation of solidarity and generation of morale (as also provided from the counterculture environment). These activists formed an ideology that was also decidedly similar and independent of past activists. While many feminists from the past fought for complete equality among men and women, it is only now that it becomes part of mainstream feminist culture. Finally, these activists created tactics, which often involved demonstrations and other protests.

The death of the Equal Rights Amendment correlates more or less with the death of Second Wave Feminism. Yet if, as previously stated, the norms really had been changed, then why did this bill fail? What is it about the Suffrage Movement that allowed it to be successful, and what is it about this social movement that led it to failure? And more importantly, is it possible that the visual culture had anything



to do with it? When one thinks of the framing of Second Wave Feminism, it feels like there was a discrepancy between what the activists stated they wanted, and how they actually framed the movement. It was determined the Equal Rights Amendment was a tangible, physical goal for Second Wave feminists. Yet their visual culture appears to express a very different set of framing processes. The signs and signifiers that were used by activists- from the Venus symbols quickly jotted on a poster to more intensive works points toward the creation and celebration instead of a women's culture, which by definition alienates others. As such, emphasizing on an "us" and "them"- "women" and "men," creates a rift between the two genders. While there were feminist publications and articles abound, these sources were for women by women, and may have proved difficult for men to identify with. The same could hold true for the visual culture. The use of the woman's body, woman's work and lives was the central theme of this movement, yet it is possible that the foreignness of a being a woman to a man could have alienated a portion of the other half of the population.

### *Chapter 5: Third Wave Feminism*

With the downfall of the Equal Rights Amendment after twenty full years of Second Wave Feminism, where was the social movement to go? By this point, the women who started the movement were getting older, and a new generation of women was coming of age. It is in this environment that scholars have determined that Third Wave Feminism arose. Unlike the shift from First Wave Feminism to the full realization of Second Wave which took an upwards of forty years, the beginnings of Third Wave Feminism can be seen as early as 1983, the year the Equal Rights Amendment failed to pass. Then why is it commonly acknowledged that these are two different sub-movements rather than the continuation of one? What is it about Third Wave Feminism that differentiates it from Second Wave, even though it appears that the two were occurring at more or less the same time?

One scholar, Amber Kinser, outlines the essential difference between Second Wave and Third Wave well in her article “Negotiating Spaces for/ through Third Wave Feminism.” She asserts that the term Second Wave is used “to suggest the era of feminism rooted in and shaped by the 1960s-1980s political climate” and Third Wave “to suggest the era of feminism rooted and shaped by the mid ‘80s- new millennium political climate” (Kinser 2004, 132). In essence, Kinser is stating that the separation of Second and Third Wave Feminism comes out of the transition between different political generations. Furthermore, she states that the leverage of labeling Third Wave aids young women in the articulation of a feminism “that responds to the political, economic, technological, and cultural circumstances that are unique to the current era” (Kinser 2004, 124). As the American society shifts in

preparation for the imminent arrival of the year 2000, there is the creation of a rift between the old and new, which leads to the two distinct waves. Yet why were there two different waves occurring at the same time? The answer seems to lie within the visibility of Second Wave Feminism, and that leaders of this mode of feminism had not yet subsided from the public eye when the leaders of the next wave of feminism were beginning to emerge (Kinser 2004).

The need for a new feminism coincides with the changing society, and the ideals of Third Wave Feminism reflect this. Particularly in regards to feminism, that belief system has become increasingly complex in our pluralistic world (Kinser 2004). In fact, a specific goal of Third Wave Feminism comes out of this existence in a pluralistic world, and believing in that pluralism: there is a focus on learning from histories and traditions, and that we can come to terms with multiple, shifting, modes of oppression that in turn relate to the multiple, shifting, axes of identity (Heywood and Drake 2003). From this, there is the development of coalition politics on these understandings so that each coalition can reach their own unique goal (Heywood and Drake 2003). This formation of coalitions from the beginning is something that is unique to Third Wave Feminism- there is no longer “feminism,” but rather “feminisms.” This “coalition-politics activism” defines itself through multiple positions in different regions of public life and a diverse population that composes its members (Heywood and Drake 2003). These coalitions were vital to the maturation of Third Wave Feminism, and showed that this tactic for mobilization was actually extremely successful. By the mid 1990s, coalitions had aided feminism in becoming even more inclusive, encyclopedic in issues, and

sophisticated in tactics (Morgan 2003). Text on this topic even believes that the methods of nineteenth century as a “trap,” that instead it is much more beneficial to the movement for women leaders to specialize on a topic, thus avoiding for the entire movement to fall into one goal (i.e. suffrage) (Morgan 2003). This belief is echoed in the sheer number of coalitions and special topics: women’s health movement, women’s studies movement, women’s spirituality movement, women’s media movement, and so on (Morgan 2003).

The characteristics of Third Wave Feminism make it decidedly different and distinct from other forms. These participants grew up in a world where feminism for cultural norms already existed in Second Wave, meaning that they did not know a world where active feminism did not exist.

Finally, these women practice feminism in a cultural milieu that is pluralistic to the point of being confusing (Kinser 2004). One side tells them that they have a right to improved opportunities, resources, and legislative support, and yet on the other side there is a camp that resists an interest in politics that enable these feminists to make claim to, or embody a change (Kinser 2004). This pluralistic culture is messy, and the new feminisms embrace that messiness- girls who want to be boys, boys who like other boys, girls who are feminine and girls who are masculine, a black person that is actually mostly white, and so on (Heywood and Drake 2003). It is shaped by this intersectionality, but also at the same time remains aware that there exists a complex relationship between power, oppression, and resistance, which is especially important to remember in this media-saturated global economy (Heywood and Drake 2003). As defined by Deborah Siegal,

“feminism is the ability of a woman to transcend barrier of racism, classism, and sexism in order to intellectualize and experience life to the fullest” (Heywood and Drake 2003, 7). This definition is a great departure from what is understood to be feminism of past generations.

Another way that scholars and feminists look at this pluralism of feminism is by incorporating these intersectionalities in with the experience of being a woman. This argument is inherently different from the first, as this is more woman-based. Issues such as race and ethnicity, age, class, sexual preference/orientation are met with others such as “disabled women, old women, women on welfare, women in prison, and prostituted women fighting sexual slavery” (Morgan 2003, liv). Therefore, while the multiplicity of the human experience during this time is acknowledged, the focus at the end is still on women. These two ideologies are different enough to wonder if there are of the same social movement, or more conservatively at opposite ends of the same spectrum, as seen in the last two waves of feminism.

One worry of scholars is that Third Wave Feminism is at risk of being its own source of failure. A possibility for feminists is that Third Wave Feminism may believe that identifying necessary gain can be seen as sufficient gain, although the two are extremely different (Kinser 2004). Kinser also points out that these new feminists must not fall into the trap of false feminism and weak feminism, false feminism focusing on one’s own personal journey, and the latter refers to only working for so much social change as a patriarchal social order can outrun (Kinser 2004). The first demonstrates the important of a collective identity in a social

movement, for if it becomes about the individual, it excludes society. Weak feminism can be linked to previous waves, and shows how the movement can die out if it is not constantly pushing socially constructed barriers. Finally, Kinser sees that the pluralistic nature of Third Wave Feminism could lead to its demise if ever retreats from continually redefining feminism. Basically, all of these arguments come out of the lack of maintaining a social movement, and ensuring that its identity and beliefs are current and contemporary.

Another worry is the dying out of feminism, due to the nature of social movements in general. A social movement by definition is a victim of its own success: the more successful a movement is and the more change is initiated, the less of a need there is for the social movement. In regards to feminism, there is a fear that the accomplishments of this grand social movement will not be accredited to the social movement, while simultaneously negating the need for the movement in the first place (Morgan 2003).

While the ideology of Third Wave Feminism is well discussed, the goals of such ideologies are somewhat less clear. Furthermore, while these ideas may be conceptualized, more often than not they are not operationalized. One source however outlines well the actual goals of Third Wave feminism as opposed to just detailing the belief system. These three goals are: to change institutions, convert to multifeminism, and to stop settling (Morgan 2003). The first, to change institutions, states that sexism is systemic- that there is not, and no need for, a population that seeks to ensure the survival of sexism (Morgan 2003). The explanation for this is that the institutions already in place function in a way that promulgate sexism, even

if no one is actively engaging in sexism- or so he/she may think (Morgan 2003). Feminism has already stated what needs to change, now there is a need to actually change social infrastructure and dismantle the systemic patriarchy (Morgan 2003). The source points out that the most change has occurred in areas in which women have the most control- women's sexual and childbearing patterns, relationships, and family demographics (Morgan 2003). The second is the push for multifeminism. This aspect to Third Wave Feminism has already been discussed in relation to ideology, however in regards to a goal the movement is hoping to change cultural norms so that we all may understand each other with dimensional depth and overlapping intersectionality (Morgan 2003). It also wants to see the realization of more coalition work, because while there is diversity, to specialize is the only way to change (Morgan 2003). Finally, there is a call to stop settling. This is probably linked with the fear that Third Wave Feminism will see as demands that are necessary as demands that are sufficient. Additionally, the desire to "stop dwindling down to tepid reforms" may have come out of the recognition that neither of the previous waves were successful to a certain degree due to this occurring (Morgan 2003, liii).

### **The Visual Culture of Third Wave Feminism**

Another unique aspect to Third Wave Feminism is its concern with representation. Perhaps it learned from the first two waves that how a movement is represented could be crucial to its outcome. Unlike the first two in which ideology was then operationalized into representation, for Third Wave Feminism it is directly integrated into the ideology. This may have come with the rise of media, and in turn

the studying of media. As described by Heywood and Drake, “Recent theory has focused on the multiple ways that forms of media don’t just represent life or the ‘real world,’ but rather help create it” (Heywood and Drake 2003, 101).

Furthermore, these new feminists may be inspired by the current day context of cultural conservatism and its relationship with the media. And perhaps “in some of the most crucial ways, the political battles fought today are battles of representation, struggles for control of the mass media, definitions, and

terminology” (Heywood and Drake 2003, 102). This battle is an interesting one given the pervasiveness of mass media in 2015, particularly from digital sources.

During this time, Third Wave Feminism may have seen the imminent outcome, with the rise of technology even in the 1980s through the 1990s, and felt the need to have input on representation. Feminists noticed that the somewhat utopian theory that surrounded electronic media was not as freeing as its supporters thought

(Fernandez 2007). One scholar notes, “History demonstrates that often such rhetorics differ drastically from the actual deployment of the technology”

(Fernandez 2007, 15). In addition to worries of representation, in the tradition of

Third Wave, feminists were critical of the fact that the access to technology is

usually class based, meaning that only the more wealthy of a society could have

regular access (Fernandez 2007). Finally, some feminist theory of the Third Wave

kept in mind that technology was part of the problems they were facing to begin

with: “Technology has been an integral part of the construction and sociohistorical positioning of identities. Centers result from the creation of margins. If we believe

that we are at the center, we owe our position to the marginalization of other



spaces” (Fernandez 2007, 16). This assertion is in many ways correct as one studies the totality of humans beings, including the aspect of intersectionality that is inherent to Third Wave. Yet at the same time due to the rapid growth of technology, feminists cannot reject this mode of reaching out to the general public, and instead searches for a way to have control over how feminism is represented. However, more than a decade out from the year 2000, having control on information flow in a media-saturated environment proves to be much more difficult, and perhaps due to this, much of the visual culture of Third Wave Feminism is found to be in more traditional forms of media- posters, signs, and flyers. However there was a group of “cyberfeminists” that emerged around 1998 (Flanagan 2007). These cyberfeminists explored the paradoxical identity of technology- its celebratory nature but also contradictory nature, and worked towards methods of appropriation, intervention, or parallel practice, in the hope of inserting women’s issues into the dominant technology discourse (Flanagan 2007). The importance of such groups cannot be understated, however, this just started to appear during the very last two years of the twentieth century. This means that in fact feminism on the Internet is something that is more characteristic of the twenty-first century, thus supporting the notion that most of the visual culture of Third Wave Feminism in the twentieth century existed on more traditional forms of media.

The rise of technology during Third Wave Feminism also sees other issues, not just in tactics, but also with populations itself. This younger generation that came of age in a world that was decidedly feminist often lacked the ability to see a world without feminism, and in turn did not realize the movement’s importance. In

representation this became a problem as some could not even abstractly recognize issues, and therefore could not be expected to translate that into a visual. Joanna Drucker states that her students experienced “historical amnesia,” and wanted them to understand the past not to become entangled with past oppressions, but rather so when they hit limits they can build a collective identity and produce insight (Drucker 2007, 14). Amelia Jones asserts that *anyone* who has taught feminism to undergraduates has come across the same issue: that to them the idea of men and women coexisting is so obvious there is an ignorance about the history and subtlety of feminism, that feminism has become naturalized into popular culture and thus become invisible (Jones 2007). Jessica Dallow states explicitly in her article that students today (2003) are afraid to identify as feminists- what will happen then to the visual culture? It therefore cannot be the same as Second Wave, where women embraced their status as a woman, because it seems that in this case younger women are rejecting that idea. For Dallow, she sees two origins in this problem: that feminists are “bra- burning, militant man-bashers” and the other is that feminism is no longer necessary (Dallow 2003, 135). This idea is interesting because in Dallow’s experience, either statement is followed with the assertion that the representation of anyone’s interpretation is now valid (Dallow 2003). Oddly enough, this is exactly what Third Wave Feminism believes ideologically- that all areas of oppression have an equal right to express themselves. In order to represent feminism, the younger feminists need to first identify what they would like to represent, which means that Third Wave Feminism must overcome these obstacles and reach its target audience in a way that they can resonate with.

Women artists mostly produced representation in Second Wave Feminism. As such, likely due to the temporal overlap of the two movements, there is again in Third Wave the presence of the fine arts, however the visual culture has evolved. As discussed in “Art, Activism, and Feminisms: Sites of Confrontation and Change” by Julie Cole, “[s]ome of feminism’s most important political achievements have been indebted to artists, who have inspired new ways to think about the public and the private, the art object and the art subject...” (Cole 2007, 176). Artists are already practiced in operationalizing concepts into tangible, visible forms, thus making the visual culture more readily generated. And perhaps for the visual culture of later twentieth century feminism, it is the artists that aid in the creation of the split between various practices that comprised the 1970s and 1980s (Molesworth 1999). Yet it is crucial to remember that these women artists were not taken seriously until they demanded that the art world do so in the 1970s- and some critics of this deem it obvious that women artists would have ever been taken seriously until they took initiative (Schor 2007).

This opinion on women artists and feminist of the Second Wave in general is not an uncommon one. In regards to the visual culture of Third Wave, like opinions on ideology often as well, feminists are highly critical of their predecessors. Some find that the utilization of the woman’s body- particularly reproductive organs, quilts, weaving, and body art “obvious” (Drucker 2007). There is an echo throughout especially the 1980s aspect of feminist activist art to return to normative methods of representation. Women desired transcendence through gender via their work, not by identification with it (Drucker 2007). Interestingly, while feminists gave

various reasons, from the sociological perspective this seems like it would be a more successful tactical choice, because rather than drawing attention to gender, in some regards it draws attention away from it. This is important to note, as it appears that Third Wave Feminism, as seen in its representation, seeks to not only show women as in their role as feminine, but also their role of human. For social movements, being as inclusive as possible can dictate the trajectory and success of the movement- no one is going to join a social movement they cannot identify with. Thus, to them, focusing on mediums and subjects that are particular to women are going to alienate men in Third Wave Feminism, and as one scholar states, "How can we produce change if we continue to be trapped within boundaries that promote alienation?" (Fernandez 2007, 16).

The correlations between theories on representation in Third Wave Feminism from the social movement and art theory from the art world at this time are striking. In traditional art history, it is acknowledged that there was a return to classic media, with encouragement of the creation of works that were more conceptually feminist (Museum of Contemporary Art 2010). This probably aligns with the art movement- Conceptual Art- that was occurring simultaneously. So instead of creating art that was clearly identifiable with women, through medium, form, and content, work produced was definitely critical, but not in a way that necessarily alienates men (Museum of Contemporary Art 2010). Similar women's issues that were explored in Second Wave Feminism were again being readdressed: the "male gaze," and the objectified female through explorations of self, and also

evocations of popular culture through the visual vocabulary of advertising (Museum of Contemporary Art 2010).

### **Sub-Case Study 1: Guerilla Girls**

The Guerrilla Girls are an example of art activist groups that emerged for Third Wave Feminism, along with Dyke Action Machine, and the Toxic Titties (Raizada 2007). The work of the Guerrilla Girls can stand as an archetype these art activist groups, as all three possessed a strong visual language, subversive humor, and a well-formed collective identity (Raizada 2007). Additionally, all three art activist groups interjected into politics, the art world, and the media to reveal gender, racial, and class injustices still existed (Raizada 2007). However The Guerrilla Girls was by far the most successful and the most recognizable of these groups due to their inclusive ideology and tactics, whereas the others were a bit more alienating.

The Guerilla Girls are probably the best example and best-known example of visual culture producers of Third Wave Feminism. They joined together in 1984, and over thirty years later are still together (The Guerrilla Girls). This group is quite explicit with their goals, and their means to reach those goals. Their statement on feminism is as follows: “We believe that feminism is a way of looking at the world. We think it’s sad that feminism has been demonized in the media for so long that many people who believe in the tenets of feminism... do not consider themselves feminists” (The Guerilla Girls). Their mantra is “to reinvent the ‘f’ word- feminism,” and can relate to the previous statement on their statement of feminism as a whole

(The Guerilla Girls). This interest in reinventing feminism away from something that is hated by the mainstream public reflects previous scholars' concerns that the younger generation seemed to be on the whole uninterested in the necessity of feminism. The tactical choice of the Guerilla Girls has also been explicitly stated: "We use facts, humor, and outrageous visuals to expose sexism, racism, and corruption in politics, art, film, and pop culture" (The Guerrilla Girls). Again, this reflects Third Wave feminist thoughts- the idea that it is not just about gender, but also about intersections with race, and although not stated, the Guerilla Girls also work against classism. Before even examples of the visuals produced by the Guerrilla Girls are seen, it is clear that they have much different underlying tones than Second Wave Feminism. These women seek to expose truth through fact, which is something that no one can deny, and also to do it in a way that is eye-catching. Rather than choosing modes of representation that are solely reserved to women, this activist group seeks to be more logical and rational in their representations.

The burst onto the public stage in June of 1984, in response to an exhibition at MoMA- a "blockbuster" exhibition where only 10 of the 169 artists were women. To these feminist activist artists, it was clear that the art world was still dominated by men, and it is here that their engagement with the feminist art movement began (Raizada 2007). Yet by 1991-1992, they became more engaged with politics, and they shifted to participating in Third Wave Feminism in the more general sense, and acted as cultural producers in protest against the 1992 National Republican Convention (Raizada 2007). Over time, the Guerilla Girls agitpop style became a visual representation of the times, and paralleled political activism headed by

coalitions such as the Women’s Action Coalition (WAC) and Women’s Health Action and Mobilization (WHAM) (Raizada 2007). Their role specifically beyond the art world were to generate campaigns that functioned as conscious-raising “public service announcements” through posters, stickers, billboards, bus advertisements, magazine spreads, protest actions, and letter-writing that contained statistics, ridicule, and humor (Raizada 2007).

Two pieces by the Guerrilla Girls are analyzed here in order to demonstrate their widespread activism:

### Sub-Case Study 1.0: *Naked* from 1989



*Naked* from the Guerrilla Girls

This poster, from 1989, is one of the Guerrilla Girls most well known pieces, and demonstrates all aspects to their tactics. The bright yellow background is attention grabbing, yet also at the same time a little uncomfortable to look at in its satirical looking context. It is starkly contrasted with the black lettering, along with the aggressive red lettering. These bright, pop colors are classic to the Guerrilla Girls. The font of the text is also traditional of this art activist group- so to someone

during this time, it is possible that they would recognize the text and general format of the poster before even really looking at it. Yet the most distinctive aspect to this work is the reclining nude on the left with the gorilla head. This interesting combination is part of the Guerrilla Girls humor and mockery. For those during this time that were familiar with the work, particularly the protests of the Guerrilla Girls (as they did hold demonstrations), one would understand that they all wore gorilla masks. This direct reference to the activist group is paired with Ingres' "The Grand Odalisque," a Romantic reclining nude done in the Oriental style. While the choice of this exact nude is unclear, perhaps due to its somewhat more appropriate nature, it is also possible that the Guerrilla Girls could be sending a subliminal message about race. Therefore, this poster targets a large audience: it does not take one who is educated in art history to understand the poster, yet it does resonate more clearly with someone who does. Finally, all of these visuals linked with the message underneath- "Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art Sections are women, 85% of the nudes are female" should strike a chord with the audience. Their choice of wording and statistics is actually extremely sociological in nature. The point of only mentioning the Modern Art Sections acknowledges the fact that women in art history is a relatively new phenomena, and thus immediately disregards any immediate response about how women had only really been in the art world since Second Wave Feminism- which would nullify their claim.

Looking at the Guerrilla Girls' own statement on the piece, they say that the original intent of this poster was for a billboard funded by the Public Art Fund out of New York City (The Guerrilla Girls). After the creation of their design, the Public Art



Fund rejected the project on the grounds “[the design wasn’t clear enough (????)” (The Guerrilla Girls). Instead of completely scrapping it, the Guerrilla Girls rented advertising space on New York City buses themselves, until the bus company cancelled the lease because they found the image was too suggestive (The Guerrilla Girls).

**Sub-Case Study 1.1: *Oh, Those Special Months of the Year!* from 1990**

# **GUERRILLA GIRLS’ POP QUIZ**

**Q.** If February is Black History Month and March is Women’s History Month, what happens the rest of the year?

**A. discrimination**

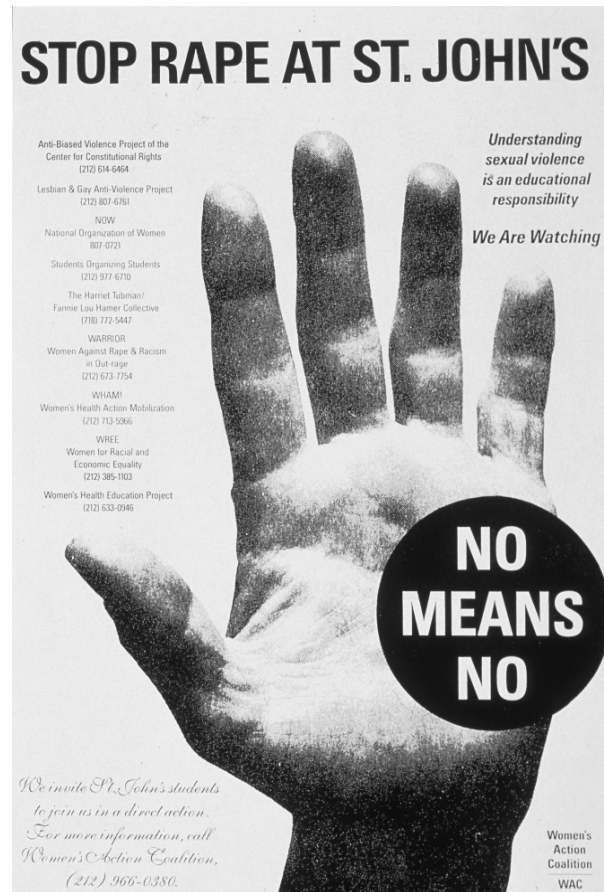
A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

*Oh, Those Special Months of the Year!* From the Guerrilla Girls

There will not be much focus on this piece, however it felt necessary to incorporate it in order to see the traditional style of the Guerrilla Girls, as well as the intersectionality of the visual culture of the activism in Third Wave Feminism. Like the previous work, this poster is incredibly simple and straight to the point. The

Guerrilla Girls often posted “Pop Quiz’s” using a variety of different types of information in order to get their point across to the audience. In this particular pop quiz, the Guerrilla Girls demonstrate the potentially alienating concept of “Black History Month” and “Women’s History Month,” which infers to some populations that these groups cannot be a part of the historical cannon, and are therefore marginalized. This poster points out that, in a humorous way, that the “only” two months a year women and black can be acknowledged for their contributions to history is during February and March, and that for the rest of the year they are again forgotten from popular culture and from history. It is a simple, clean, layout, with the bold letters evidently meaning to grab a passer-by’s attention. The most important part of this visual aspect is that even if someone were to not stop and read the poster, the name of the Guerrilla Girls is clearly visible and promotes a knowledge of the art activist group.

## Sub-Case Study 2: The Women's Action Coalition and *Stop Rape at St. John's*



*Stop Rape at St. John's* from *The New York Public Library*

It would seem to be an inadequate discussion of Third Wave Feminism if the way that coalitions functioned were omitted. The Women's Action Coalition is an example of one subgroup that specialized on a topic, and then paired up with other coalitions for larger projects. It was founded in 1992 to combat discrimination against women (The New York Public Library). Because its own specialization was "action," its members "held colorful demonstrations in support of women's rights, using a drum corps and the slogan 'WAC is watching. We will take action'" (The New York Public Library). The archives of this activist group include photographs, printed material, posters, postcards, banners, and props (The New York Public Library). In essence, this coalition was vital to the contribution of a visual culture to

Third Wave Feminism, and in part, it was its only goal. Its first meeting was on January 28, 1992 with approximately seventy-five people attendees, but by the fourth meeting that summer, there were about 300 attendees (The New York Public Library). Influenced by the activism that arose in the 1980s, particularly around the AIDS epidemic materialized by the ACT-UP direct-action organization, Women's Action Coalition had similar desires (The New York Public Library).

Their first action was focused on a sexual assault trial involving students from St. John's University, and it is during this time of actions that WAC fully realized its identity through a visual vocabulary. At this time, WAC created its signature "blue dot" logo, "modeled after television's way of obscuring rape victims' faces on camera" (The New York Public Library). In this way, Women's Action Coalition appropriated an aspect of the visual culture of early 1990s America, so that whenever someone would see their posters, they could be reminded of the allusion. Many of the members were artists and free-lance workers, which gave its members time to be active, and the results were clear (The New York Public Library). WAC was extremely visible to the public, perhaps because it was the mission of the coalition to make women's issues more recognizable. In addition to the St. John's case, they also demonstrated at a New Jersey high school in response to football players sodomizing a mentally-challenged classmate, at the Pace Gallery and the Guggenheim museum for their lack of women artists, and at both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions (The New York Public Library).

Their high visibility was matched with being a well-organized coalition, something incredibly beneficial to a social movement, with each demonstration

being well-publicized and well-executed (The New York Public Library). It seemed like this coalition was unstoppable, until they were. Perhaps due to the pluralism that was arising in Third Wave Feminism and realizing its full potential in the 1990s, difficulties within WAC appeared around race, class, ethnic, and sexual identity (The New York Public Library). Though all of these topics were discussed by the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, as well as the Lesbian Caucus, the pluralism and concentration on intersectionality caused Women's Action Coalition to lose its direction (The New York Public Library). While its success lasted well into 1993, its last meeting was held on November 6, 1995 with an attendance of about seven or eight members (The New York Public Library).

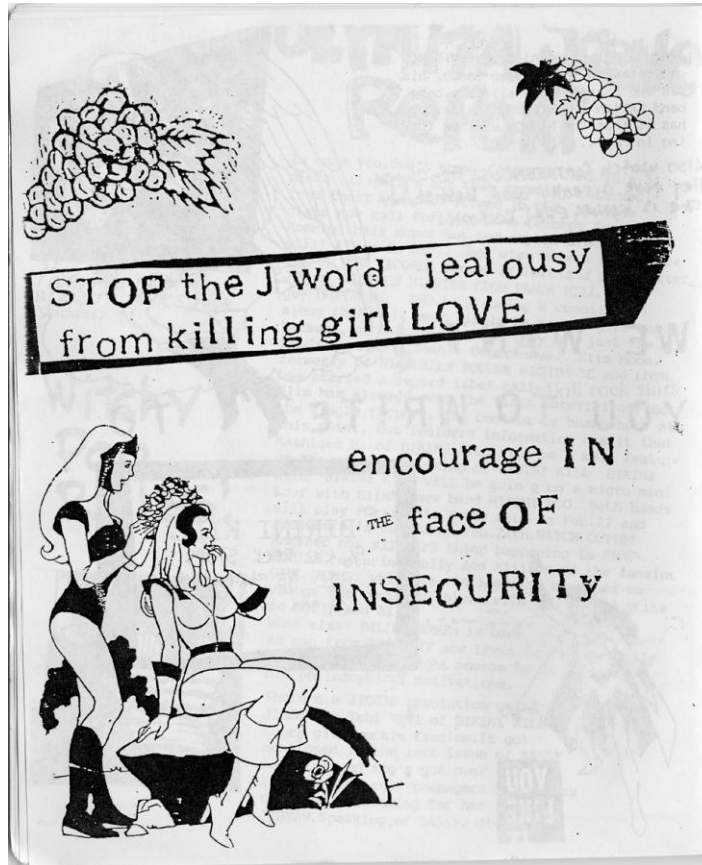
While the run of this coalition was short, its collaborations with many different women's groups demonstrate the coalition ideology of Third Wave Feminism. WAC worked with the Guerrilla Girls, Women's Health Action and Mobilization, among many others as the example from this women's group suggests.

In response to the rape trial at St. John's University, WAC, along with nine other groups, created a poster intended to bring to light sexual violence against women. The poster is plain, just black and white, and features a large hand at the center. Interestingly, the hand chosen is somewhat androgynous-it is not an idealistic woman's hand with long, thin fingers or a dainty wrist. This seems to bring to light that the slogan "No Means No" is not just applicable to violence against women, but our cultural norms and values in general. In American culture, the raising of the hand with the palm out can indicate the declining of a request, and is not something that is gender specific. Therefore, it is possible that the visual

message is pointing out that when a rape victim does this gesture, the perpetrator cannot feign ignorance, because it is a socially recognized sign. Additionally, the circle that surrounds the “No Means No” could be reference to the “blue dot” that is the symbol of WAC, but also for rape victims.

One characteristic to note about this poster is the list of all of the different women’s groups and coalitions on the side. The specialization of each group is different, including groups supporting lesbian and gay identities, anti-violence, race, student groups, education, equality, and combinations of those topics. And more significant is the participation of the National Organization of Women (NOW) that was so predominant during Second Wave Feminism. Their support demonstrates the overall support of WAC and what they stand for. This poster also represents well just how many coalitions there were, but also the ability for someone to contact any one of the groups involved, not just the main sponsor.

### Sub-Case Study 3: Riot Grrrls, 'Zines, and Bikini Kill's 'Zine Page



Page from feminist punk rock band Bikini Kill's fanzine from Grassroots Feminism

One final group to look at in regards to the visual culture and cultural production of Third Wave Feminism is Riot Grrrls. This subculture of feminism was rooted in the youngest feminists, and while actually more about music than visuals, this group produced their own visual culture nonetheless. One scholar asserts that the youth music culture was the most viable platform for third wave activism in regards to potentially new, young activists (Heywood and Drake 2003). The Riot Grrrl movement, started in Olympia, Washington and Washington, DC in 1991, comes out of this interest in activist music (Heywood and Drake 2003 & Rosenberg and Garoalo 1998). It was a young, profeminist movement that had its roots in the

punk scene- where one could find women-only concerts, or women-only mosh pits to draw attention to the issue of sexual violence against women (Heywood and Drake 2003). Now while this movement is realized in the music scene, its ideological origins are sociological and in nature. As Kim France wrote in Rolling Stone in 1993 on the Riot Grrrl movement, “riot grrrls unifying principle is that being female is inherently confusing and contradictory and women have to find a way to be sexy, angry, and powerful at the same time” (Heywood and Drake 2003, 212). This confusion on the state of women is not unlike past expressions of womanhood, thinking back to Second Wave Feminism. Over time, riot grrrls received press coverage from beyond their punk beginnings, and the movement grew to outside of the boundaries of punk music (Rosenberg and Garoalo 1998).

These riot grrrls and the riot grrrl scene was unapologetically by females, for females. They are loud and expressive, not only through music, but also through publications known as “fanzines” or commonly shortened to “zines.” Zines were quick, cheaply printed publications that have a history of their own in the United States (Rosenberg and Garoalo 1998). In the Riot Grrrl movement, many of the band members of prominent bands in this punk scene were the first to publish these zines, and it is out of this practice that the official Riot Grrrl scene was born (Rosenberg and Garoalo 1998). For the most part, these zines were composed of cut and paste collages, with or without messages that may or may not be handwritten, and sometimes were incredibly messy (Rosenberg and Garoalo 1998). All of this was a part of the riot grrrl aesthetic to be confrontational, especially with topics



such as assault and rape, and shy away from the likes of mass-media production (Rosenberg and Garoalo 1998).

Reading interviews done with riot grrrls of the time gives us today insight into their culture. Zines allowed young feminists a subversive place away from the “standard patriarchal mainstream media” – which interestingly seems reminiscent of the fears that older third-wave feminists had about media representation at this time as well (Rosenberg and Garoalo 1998, 811) . As confirmed by one interviewee, Jake (a female), “People in magazines are in positions of high power.... Zines are a rejection of mass media” and by Kim “It’s the whole mainstream thing again. It can be totally changed around and confuse people about what Riot Grrrl is all about. A zine has someone who is with it in the movement... a person who is part of the movement who is writing” (Rosenberg and Garoalo 1998, 826). Much of riot grrrl zine writing is in fact accompanied by many different visual supplements, and it is this aspect to this anti-media punk feminist movement that will be analyzed.

One page from a zine by the punk band Bikini Kill serves as an example for fanzine content. It was witnessed in a few different sources, allowing it to be one of the better-known examples of a zine. It is black and white, like all of the riot grrrl zines, and demonstrates the collage/ word combination that is generally found in zines. In the middle is the statement “STOP the J word jealousy from killing girl LOVE” with the words “encourage IN the face OF INSECURITY.” While many fanzine pages are filled with prose and words, while this one lacks, it does so by condensing the message that many of the longer written pages send. The riot grrrls were interested in created a culture for girls, where they can express themselves freely.

As such, it is not surprising that this girl band would encourage girls to support other girls- against the socially constructed insecurities that girls have. Two “superwoman”-esque girls are on the bottom, with one placing a crown of flowers on the other’s head. This is an interesting and avant-garde combination of visuals, but together state that women can be strong and powerful, but also embrace their status as a woman.

Finally, the method of using collage is visible in this example as there are various different, seemingly unrelated, pieces of paper that were pasted on to the page. The flowers and the fruit are likely a reference to femininity, and tie together this page for a visual completeness.

## **Conclusion**

The relationship between the ideology and visual culture in Third Wave Feminism is one that is close and well descriptive. Its tactical choice demonstrates that the viewpoint of Third Wave Feminism is seen as equality for all humans, channeled through women.

When comparing Third Wave Feminism to social movement theory in general it emerges that this particular feminist movement did not truly develop in the manner that most do. Because it came out of Second Wave Feminism, much of this feminist movement lacks Blumer’s five stages of social movements: agitation already existed, as did morale. Younger feminists needed to create a collective identity of their own (spirit de corps) and to come together to generate the formation of their ideology and tactics, although some of their tactics they even

borrowed from Second Wave Feminism. This could be perhaps the part of Third Wave Feminism's weakness- its close link to Second Wave Feminism. As scholars had expressed earlier in this chapter, many young people were off-put by the word feminism because they associated it with the most radical feminists of the 1960s and 1970s. Instead of being able to completely adopt their own identity, Third Wave Feminists could not get away from their predecessors. Moving to Smelser's theory, it is clear that Third Wave Feminism targets the values and norms of society, and did not seek for a "quick fix" like movements that tend to come out of panics. These feminists were deliberate and planned, because they sought to not only reach the goals of Second Wave Feminism that had not been completed, but also to work for these rights among all people.

Finally, the link between Third Wave Feminism, as well as its visual culture, and New Social Movement Theory is clear:

1. They engage civil society or the cultural sphere as an arena for collective action by emphasizing symbolic action: Third Wave Feminism through their visual culture- as also other mediums- definitely engaged the public through symbolic action. From the Women's Action Coalition appropriating the symbol for a rape victim for their campaigns demonstrates an interest in reminding their audiences of visual cues while pressing their own agenda.
2. Promote autonomy and self determination instead of attempting to maximize power and influence: This aspect is particular important to feminism because feminists are trying to demonstrate to others their capabilities as people in roles other than traditional women's roles. Autonomy and self determination

- work in their favor much more than trying to assert power, or at least in regards to Third Wave Feminism.
3. Rather than take part in conflicts over material resources, new social movements tend to be concerned with non-material social problems: The ideology of this social movement is inherently non-material as it is looking for equal treatment for men and women, but also to acknowledge the concept of axes of oppression and intersectionality. The Guerrilla Girls and the Riot Grrrl movement shows how feminists during this wave of feminism were wholly uninterested in things that were anywhere material, but rather, the immaterial root of these problems. The Guerrilla Girls showed through their mass-media campaign blitzes how inequality was still rampant in our society, and the Riot Grrrls displayed their need to express their thoughts and experiences without being persecuted for them.
  4. Problematize the process of construction of collective identities and identifying group interest: The pluralism of Third Wave Feminism meant that for young feminists, the creation of a group interest and collective identity proved to be difficult, which lead to the creation of coalitions so that all may participate in their area of expertise.
  5. Stresses the socially constructed nature of grievances and ideology: Third Wave Feminist targeted the social construction of institutions- that to many feminists, sexism did not come out of a person or people, but rather the institutions that had been in place for all of history.

6. Recognize the variety of latent and underground networks rather than give all credit to centralized organizations: This again comes from the use of coalitions, and active collaborations between coalitions. As from the WAC poster from the rape case at St. John's University, the special topics of coalitions were wide, but all came together and give more or less equal credit to all of them.

The visual culture of Third Wave feminism reflects the social movement theories to which the ideologies apply. The desire to create a visual vocabulary that is not exclusively by women for women outlines the inclusive nature of this social movement. This is crucial in the framing of Third Wave Feminism. Because feminists were seeking to fight for the rights of a broader audience, it only makes sense for the framing as manifested in their visual expression to encompass a larger audience. The way that activists during this time was one that was more toward the belief that all human beings were equal- so although, for example, the Guerrilla Girl's *Naked* was about women, it was expressed in a manner that anyone could relate to. Due to this, while the goals could not be measured in a concrete way, their visual culture and ideology aligns so that outsiders can well understand what it is exactly is trying to be achieved.

The examples from the Guerrilla Girls show that even though there was an increase in technology, the most effective tactics were still physical ones before 1998. Furthermore, while there was often the use of the female body or references to marginalized groups, the information that accompanied was factual and meant to bring in those outside of the marginalized groups in to understand their plight. The

Women's Action Coalition poster described the high amounts of collaborative work, and the ability to be involved with one or many of these groups. It visually is plain, but as previously stated, it accesses the part of our visual vocabulary that is incredibly intertwined with our socialization process- we know that in our culture a raised hand means to stop. Finally, the Riot Grrl example shows that although there was the return of a more generalized visual culture in Third Wave Feminism, there are still traces of a sphere that is exclusively for women, and because it is self-conscious of that fact, it appears to still be successful in its undertakings.

## *Chapter 6: Discussion*

It is clear from examining the three waves of feminism in the twentieth century that the visual culture of a social movement holds an important place in understanding the ideology of the moment, but also the evolution of the visual vocabulary in the United States. From looking at all three of the sub-case studies of First Wave Feminism, it would be near impossible for a contemporary viewer to understand exactly what the message of the sources were. Yet to anyone during that time, all of the signs and signifiers would be readily accessible. Later during Second Wave Feminism, the protests to the 1968 Miss America contest featured activists disposing of objects that even today are tied to the womanly experience, such as high heels and makeup, but also items that would not be, such as dish detergent. This tells us that although the social movement and the society in which it existed were maintained (i.e. Feminism in the United States), time can change the way a specific society understands itself visually. This visual vocabulary is also supplemented by norms, values, and beliefs. Therefore, it must have been to at least some extent normative in 1968 to associate women with dish detergent, although now this does not hold true.

The fact that the visual culture is specific to each wave of feminism is something that is a similarity of the waves, but ultimately creates differences below the surface. The utmost universal factor is that all feminist representations throughout the twentieth century notoriously disrupted public space. This could be done through a demonstration, a march, posters, billboards, notecards, cartoons, and so on. Due to the counterculture nature of social movements, it only seems

logical for their visual expressions to disrupt the public sphere that is expressed through normative expressions.

As previously stated, there was no need during First Wave Feminism to “wow” viewers, but rather simply utilize an already present visual vocabulary to suit their own cause. However as the twentieth century continues on, this becomes less true. While both Second and Third Wave Feminism engage with the visual vocabulary of their times, there is an increase in a need to “wow” audiences. Perhaps this comes out of the increase in media technology and/or the increasingly pluralized world, and so in order to gain attention, it must be something shocking. Suzanne Lacy’s *In Mourning and In Rage* was a protest piece that included visuals through the colors that referenced aggression and death, but did so in a way that is slightly shocking to the viewer. The Guerrilla Girls’ *Naked* used the nineteenth century Ingres painting *Grand Odalisque* to access the general public’s understanding of an example of fine art, but then also replaced the woman’s head with a gorilla and used bright, fauvist colors to catch the eye. These two conflicting visual cues, the fine art and bright colors, were then placed on a billboard, which capitalizes on common commercial devices.

Another characteristic of First Wave Feminism and its visual culture is how its framing pointed toward a solution rather than the problem. While the representations produced were definitely radical for their time, all of the visuals point toward the positivity of women having the vote rather than the negativity of women not having the vote. This could be important to the success of this movement because the lack of suffrage only truly applies to women, whereas the



presence of suffrage for women affects everyone. In turn, it has a slightly more inclusive nature in its ideology, and thus those that are bystanders are more likely to become participants. This does not hold true as much for Second and Third Wave Feminism, especially Second Wave.

Second Wave Feminism's visual culture was found to be extremely exclusive given their ideological goals. Activists for this wave pointed toward women as an oppressed minority. As stated by Suzanne Lacy for *Three Weeks in May*, "Rape is not sexual. Rape is an act of aggression of one class, men, against another, women" (Lacy 1977, 66). From a sociological perspective, sentiments such as these immediately set up a Conflict Theory situation, with men as the bourgeoisie and women as the proletariat. Now while it was definitely very important for women have experienced Second Wave Feminism of and for themselves, which they did, having a goal such as the Equal Rights Amendment framed the way they did was only set up for failure. No one from the bourgeoisie is going to support the proletariat when in Marxian tradition; the proletariat is destined to overthrow the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, the visual culture expresses this oppression visually, from *Womanhouse* being on experiences as a woman, *Three Weeks in May* and *In Mourning and In Rage* centered on violence against women by men, and even in the Venus symbol on the many posters at demonstrations. Yet as critics of Second Wave Feminism from the Third Wave believed, there was the most progress from Second Wave in the realms where women had power (Morgan 2003). However, judging how those activists wanted to express themselves, the answer seems to be of course. Women through Second

Wave Feminism made amazing gains, because that social movement allowed them to really encourage taking control of their place in their society.

In Third Wave, there is also a lack of pointing toward a definitive solution, although simultaneously the social movement does not really provide one. Due to this Third Wave Feminism may be perceived as a more intellectual social movement than a political one. These activists pointed toward the problem of intersectionality and the existence of various systems of oppression, but perhaps all they desired is for people to come to recognize those things. And we are still working toward that today, with terms such as “white privilege” - there is no one quick simple answer, but rather recognition first so that the institutions that persist these oppressions may begin to be dismantled. This was seen in the sub-case studies as the Guerrilla Girls’ *Oh, Those Special Months of the Year!*, where women and African-Americans are presumed to be omitted from the historical canon and rather placed into their own marginalized groups.

The most interesting and introspective aspect to the framing of these social movements is how the activists chose to look at themselves. During First Wave Feminism, women looked at themselves as civilizers. They were different from men, but it strengthened their argument for suffrage because it meant they could “clean up” politics, and evidence of this is evident in this visual culture. This shifts during Second Wave Feminism to women as an oppressed minority group, where they united together for something akin to “Woman Power.” This oppressed minority group came together and vocally fought out against the “majority,” or men. Finally, there is another shift in Third Wave Feminism. Instead of focusing on women versus

men, these activists mainly focused on oppression in general, with the intent of stating that ultimately we are all just human beings. While Second and Third Wave Feminism are much more similar in their framing, the main difference can be described best through a comparison of two visual signs. During Second Wave, there was the use of the raised fist symbol located in the Venus symbol. It signifies unity, defiance, and strength. During Third Wave, the Women's Action Coalition's poster for the St. John's rape case featured a raised hand. This symbol in American culture means "no," or "stop." The first symbol is much more aggressive and demanding, while the second is resolute and assertive, as well as androgynous. Thus, while the first was visual shorthand for "female defiance," the latter references that all human beings use the "stop" symbol. Thinking of rape, it universalized it beyond women to all people by stating that in American culture, no means no, regardless of what someone is saying no to.

While Third Wave Feminism placed more focus on central symbols that are collectively accepted in American culture in order to convey the wrongness of rape, representation of sexual violence against women throughout the twentieth century was not always this way. It was not truly acknowledged in American activism until Second Wave Feminism, but there are references to it in First Wave. The cartoon "Dirty Pool of Politics" has a demon titled "White Slavery," meaning to refer to women that were forced into prostitution or sexual slavery. Moving to Second Wave, there is the first real backlash against sexual violence against women. As seen from the case study on Second Wave, activists believed "the personal is political" and therefore moved rape and sexual assault into the social movement.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

Each culture has a set of visual vocabulary that can be utilized for conveying messages between members of said culture. Different organizations are able to tap into these signs and signals, from the advertising industry exploiting what a culture considers desirable traits and associating those traits with products, to our favorite comical Instagram account that sums up hilarities of contemporary life in a photograph. Social movements are also capable of integrating this understanding of a visual vocabulary into their tactics to further their goals. This thesis took feminism in the United States during the twentieth century as a case study, and examined the visual production during the peaks in activity, described as waves. This examination on visual production was done in the hopes of finding a correlation between the signs and symbols used and characteristics of the social movement and the society in which it existed. After an explanation of the ideology and trajectory of each wave, selections of the more common visual expressions of the specific wave were analyzed. This analysis was done to determine the messages that the visual culture wanted to convey, and the method in which activists went about it. It was found that the visual culture of each wave of feminism correlated closely with the actual goals, as opposed to the stated goals. In First Wave Feminism, activists ultimately just wanted the ability to vote, and so the visual culture does not severely challenge the status quo of norms, values, and beliefs toward the role of women in society. In Second Wave Feminism, the visual culture correlated more with the self-actualization of women rather than promoting a culture that supported the Equal Rights Amendment through a visual production that often alienated men. Finally, in

Third Wave Feminism, the visual culture still featured references to the female experience, but its expressions attempted at transmitting a message that was more androgynous. Instead, this visual culture desired to aim at the point that we are all just people, and thus it was more engaging to a broader audience to promote equality for all.

These findings are important because it alters how anyone may participate in visual culture. It proves that Americans are quite literate in the visual vocabulary that as members they engage with, and the messages of visual expressions really do resonate with bystanders. For social movements and individuals alike, this thesis reveals that one must be deliberate when producing a visual culture that is meant to be received by the public. All signs, symbols, and signifiers must be assessed first to determine if they are the most accurate operationalization of the concept that wants to be communicated. This applies to feminists and feminism as well. As learned from Second Wave Feminism, feminists must be careful to decide what they want their target audience to be. There is a large difference as discussed between a visual culture that is meant for just women, and a visual culture that is meant for men as well.

More research needs to be conducted on the extent that visual production affects the public opinion and outcomes. While it has been shown that visual culture of twentieth century American feminism reflects the ultimate ideology of the movement and can possibly affect outcomes, what would happen if the visual aspects of a concept were isolated? Is it the visuals alone that can affect change, or the visual culture paired with other modes of communication, such as word written

and spoken, music, and so on. This could be helpful not only to feminism, social movements, but to expressing an idea of persuasion to a large population in general. Regarding feminism in particular, research into how visual production can affect the social movement, society, and outcomes can be important in the twenty-first century. With the rise of electronic media, members of American society are now constantly bombarded with visual elements. It is beneficial to feminism to understand how to be able to best express itself visually.

Research also needs to be done on the visual culture of other social movements, both within and outside of the United States. The visual culture of a society is specific to that society, and thus there may be differences between the visual culture of feminism in the United States and outside of it. How other social movements have chosen to visual express themselves could also produce significant findings. What visual vocabulary do they utilize to further their goals? What is the relationship between the ideology, the visual culture, and the outcome? And from that, can correlations be made between the findings of this thesis to the findings of that future research?

Exploring the visual culture of twentieth century feminism provides, through case study analysis, the importance of how we choose to visually communicate with each other. Over the course of 100 years, ideology of activists and society as a whole evolved. This evolution is witnessed in the ever-changing way that American feminists communicated with the greater public, signaling that ultimately, a picture truly is worth a thousand words.

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