

Student

Instructor

Course

Date

How did the Feminist Movement evolve in the 1960s and 1970s?

For the longest time, the feminist movement has been driven by events occurring within the society and woman's place in it. Indeed, since its beginnings in the early 1800s, the women's movement has been driven by the need of women to transform the society and secure their place in an otherwise patriarchal society. As such, women have lobbied a range of issues ranging from guardianship of infants, divorce, property rights, access to the medical professions and higher education in general, to protective legislation, right to vote, and equal pay for female employees. These campaigns have, however, occurred in different periods of time, with each exacting its own influence on the feminist movement. This paper focusses on the evolution of the feminist movement in the 1960-70ss.

Often referred to as the "second wave feminism", the 1960 – 70s feminist movement arose out of the turbulent social turmoil experienced in the United States in 1940-50s. The 'second wave feminism' became more radicalized under the leadership of various outspoken American women. The 1960-70s were characterized by a mass entry of women into the workforce. As a result, it shifted conventional workplace stereotypes against women of the previous decades. Thus, the 'second wave feminism' was primarily focused on disassembling workplace inequality, including salary inequity and increasing women's access to better jobs. Feminists proposed to achieve this by seeking the abolishment of discriminatory laws and unfair labor practices. To this end, feminist activists distributed education materials to women across

the country, regarding reproductive health and sex and pursued the legalization of all types of birth control (Collins 245). Feminists created political organizations and published articles, books, as well as essays critiquing sexism and patriarchy in society.

However, to achieve equality, feminists realized that women were required to transform the manner in which the society spoke about, thought of, and treated women. This required more than merely changing laws — this demanded a radical shift in every aspect of the American society to ensure that men and women would be regarded as equals (Rosen 196). The main objective of feminists in this period was to reverse the ubiquitous belief that since women differed from men biologically, they were inherently more emotional, intellectually inferior, and were better off executing domestic chores as compared than professional tasks or politics.

Additionally, the feminist movement of the 1960-70s was also influenced by the civil rights movement of this period; whereby, reform legislation inspired changes in the legal status of women. Moreover, as a result of the civil rights movement, legislations were amended to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of race and gender. Women also became more active in the civic activism, which, in turn, helped them advance their agenda (Collins 367). Another key influence on the feminist movement was the approval of the birth-control pills by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which empowered women to take charge of the bodies and sexuality as well as plan their lives around professional duties and domestic responsibilities (Coontz).

In conclusion, the key concern of the feminist movement was not to pull apart the predominant system but to open it up for increased participation of women in politics and public life. Nevertheless, the extreme part of "women's liberation" movement was strongly driven to totally dismantle the patriarchal tendencies that, in their view, were subjugating every aspect of

the lives of women, including their private individual lives. As such, they propagated the notion that "the personal is political" —stating that political inequality against women had correspondingly vital personal implications. Thus, the various wings of the feminist movement pursued equality for women at both the personal and political level, and thinking retrospectively, it can be stated that 1960-70s feminists were quite effective in their claims and anchored modern world.

Works Cited

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