

Second Wave Feminism and Political Change: A Comparative Study of Feminist Movement Outcomes in Three Countries

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Second Wave Feminism and Political Change: A Comparative Study of Feminist Movement Outcomes in Three Countries

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Abstract

This thesis explores the extent to which the feminist movement altered gender policies in the US, Norway, and Italy in the 1970s and 1980s. The starting hypothesis was that the feminist movement exerted a strong influence on gender policies, especially concerning abortion and reproductive rights, the gender wage gap, and family leave. The primary method was a comparative analysis of scholarly research and qualitative data, supplemented with an ethnographic approach which gathered contextual, empirical knowledge about the social conditions and behaviors of people who had first-hand experience with the subject matter. The primary investigator conducted one-on-one interviews with four professors and two experts of the Italian feminist movement, interviewing two people from each of the countries considered for the research. The outcome of this research shows that Norway is indeed a particular case compared to Italy and the United States; and, while Italy has developed a progressive set of policies regarding abortion and parental leave, the US tells a different story, with very poor gender policies. Ultimately, this research concludes that feminist movements are the reason why conversations about abortion, parental leave, and the gender wage gap began in the first place in these three countries.

Dedication

For my nonno, who taught me what it means to be loved unconditionally

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I cannot say thank you enough to my parents. They taught me what it means to fight for what I believe in. They always supported me and pushed me to be the best version of myself. Without them, I would not be the person I am today.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Feminism is generally considered to be the belief in the equality of genders in the economic, cultural and political realms of life. Scholars usually divide it into three waves: the first wave developed in the late 19th century and continued throughout the first part of the 20th century; the second wave developed through the second part of the 20th century; and the third wave developed from the beginning of the 21st century until the present. According to *The Oxford Handbook of American Women's and Gender History*, first-wave feminism focused on voting rights and property rights, second-wave feminism focused on equality and anti-discrimination, and third-wave feminism focused on individualism and on defining what it means to be feminist.

The main focus of this thesis is second wave feminism, since, of each of the three waves, it achieved the most, and it comprises a time frame crucial to feminist discourse in the West. Although the second wave began in the United States in the 1960s, it soon spread all around the Western world: women decided it was time they demanded equality. Women wanted equality in all aspects, from personal life to work life; they wanted to gain reproductive rights, as well as reducing, if not eliminating, the wage gap. It was a time frame where women continuously criticized how society was male-oriented, both in the workplace and in politics. For example, one of the central campaigns of second wave feminists, among other things, was to be represented in the governance of their respective countries. However, the feminist movement's path to gender equality was not smooth. In fact, feminist movements also had to deal with internal turmoil, given the underrepresentation of minority women within the movement.

Although new policies were introduced to lessen the gap between genders, to what extent did the feminist movement alter gender policies in the US, Norway, and Italy in the 1970s and 1980s? My hypothesis is that, in each of these three countries, the feminist movement exerted a strong influence on gender policies, especially those concerning abortion and reproductive rights, the wage gap, and family leave. The feminist movement was strong because of the political, social, and cultural pressure it exerted on those three countries. To test this hypothesis, it is important to firstly explore the reasons why the feminist movements in these three countries were politically effective, and to assess and compare their respective successes country-by-country.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This thesis will focus on second wave feminism. However, this focus does not refer to the conventional “second wave” time frame but it does refer to a period where feminist movements highlighted and fought for a cluster of similar issues, namely the gender wage gap, family law, and reproductive rights. It is important to underline this difference in terminology as the three countries that I will analyze all have different timings with respect to their feminist movements’ “waves.” For example, the Norwegian feminist movement experienced its second wave between 1879 and 1890, while the American one experienced it between 1960 and 1980.

For this comparative analysis I used a mixed method of scholarly research and qualitative ethnographic data. I began by collecting secondary data, reviewing articles, books, and legal reviews concerning the wage gap, family law, and reproductive rights in the three countries already cited. By doing so I compared and contrasted how the national feminist movements impacted gender policies between the 1970s and the 1980s. Once I explored the theoretical data, I continued my research by conducting one-on-one ethnographic interviews with six different women, two from each of the countries I took into consideration. I chose to use an ethnographic approach in my thesis in order to answer my research questions by reproducing contextual, empirical knowledge about the social aspect and the behaviors of people who had first-hand experience with the subject matter. In addition, I believe that firsthand experiences are extremely useful in this case, to understand how the relationship between feminist movements and political parties has had an impact on real people’s lives.

The use of ethnographic data was also chosen to enhance and humanize my research, a tribute to the efforts of feminism to value the voices of individuals and to consider individual

struggles to be a political issue. Even though ethnographic research is usually used in sociology, I chose to use it in a political science thesis because concrete examples can “enhance our analyses of political communication and power” (Wedeen, 2010). Furthermore, “comparative politics uses a lot of ethnography because of long-standing tradition of fieldwork” (Wedeen, 2010). With the mixing of concrete examples and abstract concepts, “we can refine and undermine, negate and create novel explanations about politics” (Wedeen, 2010).

The six professors were selected on my thesis reader’s suggestion who also put me in contact with the interviewees. While conducting the interviews I was interested in their experience with their national feminist movement and how they perceived the relationship between politics and the social movement. I was also interested in whether the effect of this relationship brought any concrete change in the personal and professional lives of my interviewees.

I contacted the interviewees through email and conducted online meetings through the Zoom platform. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way, indeed I had six questions prepared for each of the meetings, but I also added some more depending on the conversation and on the data I was obtaining from the professor and their experience. The meetings all had different time durations, from about 25 minutes to one hour, and they were each recorded using the specific setting on the Zoom app. I later transcribed them in order to be able to analyze, compare and contrast the statements.

After conducting the interviews, it was clear to me that the issue of abortion was going to be my main focus, followed by a smaller section on wage gap and parental leave. My chosen methodology of ethnography lends itself well to the discussion of abortion, which is often emotionally evocative and linked to personal convictions rooted in religion, spirituality, politics

and psychology; whereas wage gap and parental leave are factual trends charted clearly in economic and statistical research. This research result is also driven by a methodological commitment to “grounded theory.” A research conducted using this framework starts with a question, in this case posed at the beginning of this thesis, and then moves on to the collection of qualitative data. Once everything has been analyzed, ideas and concepts emerge from the data; in my case, the data showed me that the issues of parental leave and wage gap were not only linked and went hand-in-hand, because parental leave is almost non-existent in some countries, women tend to stay home after a pregnancy, widening the wage gap. I also discovered that there was very little data on those issues for the time frame I had chosen to analyze; while conversely, the topic of abortion yielded robust discussions. Therefore, my initial hypothesis was adjusted to reflect what the data told me.

To understand whether feminist movements in Italy, the US and Norway have exerted influence over gender policies such as abortion, wage gap, and parental leave, it is important to observe and analyze each policy area. In the following chapters I will review the results of this research.

Chapter 3: Case Studies

In the following chapter, I will explain why I chose to center this investigation on three case studies: Italy, Norway, and the US. All of the information was gathered after I held my interviews.

Italy is a highly interesting case study to analyze in that, although feminist movements surged at the end of the nineteenth century, the Fascist era erased every progress the movement had achieved, bringing the social condition of women back a hundred years. Therefore, to explore how women took their power and rights back after the end of the Second World War is of interest to political scientists. The US is a stimulating case study as well, because social movements, not only that of the feminists, have achieved incredible things and changed the status quo multiple times; therefore, it is important to understand how the feminist movement had an impact on the gender policies in the US. Norway, on the other hand, is a singular case study compared to Italy and the US because the Norwegian feminist movement achieved important and extraordinary goals in the battle for equal rights long before everyone else; indeed, they began changing the male-oriented status quo very early in the nineteenth century. A comparison between these three environments exposes various successes and drawbacks that will allow us to characterize the feminist movement in broad terms, as a larger international phenomenon, and also to identify contextual variances.

Italian feminism always advocated for better education for women and an increase in social conditions. It experienced a setback during the Fascist era under the rule of Benito Mussolini as the fascist ideology dictated that a woman's place was in the house serving men.

However, in 1925 women obtained the right to vote even if only during local elections. After the Second World War, new and more progressive feminist movements surged and they advocated for reproductive rights and divorce laws. In 1945 women finally gained full suffrage and were able to vote even in national elections. The feminist movements that started to arise after the War were part of the second wave of feminism which focused on equality and anti-discrimination. Among the Italian movements, many were being created with the intent to enter the political debate and make women's voices louder in order to be heard by the entire Italian society. In Italy, the feminist movement created a coalition with the students' movement and the workers' movement, but as soon as these two movements fulfilled their political agenda, the feminist movement was left alone and, from that moment on, the movements stopped having any substantial impact on the political debate, focusing instead on more cultural issues. Therefore, in Italy, "feminism's political difficulties have been exemplified by its silence in the political arena" (Ergas, 1982). In 1980, Italy signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women which was an international treaty proposed at the United Nations General Assembly.

In the US, feminist movements had a substantial influence in the political debate. The main group in the US was called the National Organization for Women. They collected a lot of legal victories among which they obtained the ban on discrimination based on gender in the workplace and the legalization of access to birth control for couples, whether they are married or not. Moreover, the feminist movement convinced the US government to implement Title X which developed a program aimed at helping individuals and couples with family planning and health services. The movement also outlawed discrimination on the basis of gender in public schools and housing. Rape finally became a crime in the mid 1970s. Although the National

Organization for Women did not have a lot of members, they still obtained changes in different domains, such as banning employment discrimination, and promoting childcare centers, parental leave, equal education and equal job opportunities. Moreover, the United States, alongside Italy, signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In Norway, the feminist movement had a different history. Norwegian women obtained their emancipation very early compared to other countries; indeed, by 1911, women could already vote. Women's social condition was so much better than most countries that second wave feminism was already underway by 1879. When the second wave of feminism emerged in the rest of the world, Norwegian women already obtained equality in marriage, and so they focused their efforts onto obtaining the same rights of men in other domains of life, like workplaces. The aim of the feminist movement in Norway at this point was to change the status quo of the state which had always been male-dominated and transform it into an equal gender balance. This new movement attracted a lot of attention, especially from the media, therefore, especially during the first years of its life, the Norwegian feminist movement was able to bring a lot of change. The movement had a lot of different internal identities; some wanted to fight against discrimination in housing, others wanted to fight against discrimination in the workplace. Finally, they were able to change gender policies: they first legalized abortion,¹ then they made marital rape illegal, and lastly they reformed many policies impacting the work environment—among which they extended pregnancy leave for women and extended parental leave both for men and women.

¹ Originally, abortion was permitted only if the mother was in danger, a later bill granted abortion upon the woman's own decision.

The historical and social context of feminism in these three countries is crucial in order to further understanding of whether, how and when feminist movements in Italy, the US, and Norway altered gender policies between the 1970s and 1980s. The rest of this thesis will focus especially on changes in laws regarding abortion and reproductive rights, wage gap, and family leave.

Chapter 4: Literature Review

Before venturing further into the analysis of the research collected about the three countries, some basic terms about feminist movements should be clarified. Feminist movements have been classified as political phenomena and they have been subjected to strict scrutiny from scholars all around the world, many setting out to explain the political aspects of the feminist movement. Therefore, much literature has been produced in order to explore why and how feminists have come to play such an important role in the political arena and whether they have actually made a difference in changing gender policies.

McBride and Mazur have explored the concept of “state feminism,” which is when the government of a given state adopts policies that are advantageous to women and their rights. State feminism can have two different functions: to define women’s policy agencies,² and to analyze whether these agencies actually played a role in raising awareness about the issues raised by women. Furthermore, there are two types of state feminism. First, there is *movements state feminism* where the government addresses the movement by endorsing and encouraging ideas and actors, such as legislators, which embody the cause of women. Second, there is *transformative state feminism*, in which “the demands already started within the state become 'explicitly feminist' and work towards full gender equality and the possibility of transforming relationships between genders” (McBride, Mazur, 2010).

In addition to state feminism, there are also different types of feminist movements introduced by Molyneux. One type of movement is “that which mobilized to demand female suffrage, have a leadership, a membership, a broader following, and a political programme”

² Agencies here is defined as organizations advocating for feminist policies.

(Molyneux, 1998). The second type is one which is more invested in politics, and finally the third type is a movement whose “significance is being given both by its numerical strength but also by its capacity to effect change in some way or another whether this is expressed in legal, cultural, social, or political terms” (Molyneux, 1998).

According to this theoretical framework, women’s movements have more chances of being successful in carrying out their suggested policies if they collaborate with women’s policy agencies; women’s policy agencies are those agencies that effectively influence the development of policies and facilitate the participation of feminist movements in the political arena (McBride, Mazur, 2010).

Indeed, women’s policy agencies can stimulate social movements to obtain procedural access and policies that can help achieve their goals. Once the movements, together with the help of political agencies, acquire the knowledge necessary to produce their own political rhetoric, they are ready to start the process that will lead to policy changes. McBride and Mazur argue that the politics of state feminism have been a core characteristic of the political practices in developed democracies. Political actors have dealt with the demand of more gender policies by instituting specific agencies or offices to address the issue; this is one of the major triumphs of the feminist movement, in that their demands were recognized as significant enough to change the structure and hierarchy of government function, to expand and embrace further inclusion.

On the reasons why feminist movements have become such important players in the political arena, the authors state that it is because women needed more representation in the government in order to make democracies more democratic; therefore, the more governments endorse feminist policies and goals, the more they will increase representation in their state. Regarding this, Ergas argues that the lack of women’s rights was due to the fact that women did

not really participate in elections, and this resulted in poor representation in the government (Ergas, 1982). On the contrary, Molyneux argues that

we see a steady progression in women's political involvement in the diverse range of political experiences from revolutionary upheavals, while the numbers of women involved in liberal political processes as voters, candidates for election, members of parties and governments has continued to rise. (Molyneux, 1998)

The success of feminist movements is, according to McBride and Mazur, due to the following elements: “agency resources and structural characteristics, women's movement resources, policy environment characteristics, and elements of left-wing support” (McBride, Mazur, 2010). The support of left-wing parties is extremely important because they are very similar, both ideologically and organizationally, to feminist movements. Furthermore, left-wing parties tend to work alongside movements in the promotion of civil liberties, and they have “incorporated their demands in policy platforms, they have established women's sections, and placed women's movement leaders in top positions” (McBride, Mazur, 2010).

When asking about what the significance of the success of these movements is, McBride and Mazur argue that feminism can help democracies be more democratic, and that these states can consequently be more stable, since there is an eventual equilibrium resulting from expanding access to rights to traditionally marginalized sectors of the community. According to McBride and Mazur, there are three conditions necessary for the success of feminist movements. First, the movement should have high levels of resources within the movement, such as “strength, cohesion, degree of interest, activism, and institutionalization” (McBride, Mazur, 2010). Second, the movement should have an advantageous policy environment³ that they would have had to acquire through the collaboration with women's policy agencies, which includes “issue frame fit,

³ The policy environment includes all aspects surrounding policy-making.

openness of policy arenas, and weak countermovement” (McBride, Mazur, 2010). Issue frame fit is defined as “the fit at the beginning of a debate between the micro frames of the women’s movement actors and those of the policy actors” (McBride, Mazur, 2010). Issues frame fit are important because they influence the likelihood that the policies put forth by feminist movements will actually be effective. Also, it influences “whether agency leaders insert themselves into debates and become insiders” (McBride, Mazur, 2010). Third, the movement would achieve its goals faster if the state’s government would lean more towards a left-wing atmosphere in that this particular political arena is more “ideologically and organizationally close to women’s movement actors” (McBride, Mazur, 2010).

In some countries, politics and culture are two realms that are not completely distinct and can be interconnected in a number of ways. Rutter argues that since feminist movements date back to the 19th century, and are not a recent phenomenon, it is hard to make a distinction between the effect that they have on the political sphere rather than on the cultural one. As an example, Rutter explores the concept of “double militancy,” which details how political life and personal life are interchangeable and, in the specific case of feminist movements, describes women that are involved in politics as much as they are involved in feminist activities. In Italy, for example, this mixture of the cultural and political realms is very present with the main political parties being exceptionally active in cultural projects even in periods when they are not running political campaigns (Rutter, 1990). Interchanging cultural and political realms is something that belongs to feminist groups too; indeed, two of the most famous Italian feminist groups, *Unione Delle Donne Italiane*⁴ and *Movimento di Liberazione Della Donna*,⁵ while

⁴ *trans.* Union of Italian Women.

⁵ *trans.* Women’s Liberation Movement.

defining themselves as political entities, also focus on sociocultural changes. Overall, feminist groups in general started shifting their goals from political activism to social activism during the 1970s and 1980s. However, in recent times, feminist movements have begun to move away from political activism to give space to a more relaxed attitude, limiting their interventions to fewer cases and always taking a defensive position on established positions, rather than taking action to expand and add policies. This shift to a more relaxed and defensive posture grew out of the “necessity of continuing to connect individual and collective goals; and by the urgency of retaining past gains, while appreciating partial victories, in a period of political stagnation” (Rutter, 1990).

To support this idea, Epstein, in “The Successes and Failures of Feminism,” argues that unfortunately, feminism has devolved over time into an idea more than a movement, and even alliances with other, newer social movements are not enough to make political changes. Indeed, there is a wide gap between what the activists would like to accomplish and what they actually accomplish, which is often limited to very narrow cases. However, over the years, through their double identity, these feminist groups have obtained legal, social, and economic changes, bringing the emancipation of the woman to places unimaginable before, even if only on paper.

Ergas explores the relationship between feminism and political parties. She explains how in the 1970s, the second wave of feminism was beginning to take form in the Western world, and the movement was gathering the characteristics of political movements and parties. The main focus of this new movement was to define the changes of female-male identities and understand their relation in a political manner by dealing directly with political actors, such as politicians and political parties. As in Rutter’s ideas, Ergas also argues that because of changes in the political arenas of different countries, the feminist movement shifted from political activism to

socio-cultural activism, focusing its attention to small objectives that almost never affect policies. This shift was highlighted by the fact that the movement was not able to keep up with the steady political changes and by the arising of new social movements that ended up moving the attention away from women's associations.

Ergas continues her argument by underlining the fact that feminist movements have always been created during times of crisis, and that mass mobilization has been used as tool to defeat injustices; nonetheless, their existence was always cut short by some other social movement or political change. For this reason, Ergas argues that the only way that women's movements have been able to make their way to politics was to take advantage of political crises in times when the status quo of things was being challenged on multiple levels (Ergas, 1982). What begins as a period of political crisis and social turmoil, allowing feminists to attract more activists to their cause, ends when the period of political crisis and social turmoil ends, as the movement loses leverages and is then excluded from politics and has to focus on smaller issues with no policy relevance.

In addition, Ergas explores this relationship between women's movements' role in politics and revolutionary moments in history further by saying that it is the outcome of three processes. First, social turmoil and instability can bring women into active roles and therefore raise their participatory rates in the political process. Second, women taking control over movements can give "access to political resources such as theory, organizational, and communication networks, leadership skills" (Ergas, 1982, p. 255). Third, during political crises, women, who had never played a role in the political arena, can now have a say in the conversation. Through these three processes, the expectation of a change from these new movements can also be translated in a need to change the individual identity definition; indeed,

“political demands represent the projection of desires to change experiences on an existential plane” (Ergas, 1982, p. 255). Furthermore, Ferree and Mueller explore how the feminist movement has changed over the years, arguing that bringing issues about women’s underrepresentation into politics is the main characteristic of “women’s self-definition of their needs” (Ferree and Mueller, 2004, p. 580). Indeed, defining their needs plays a key role in the decision-making process of what is going to be public policy. The authors also argue that feminist movements do not try to become political parties or to use violence for political purposes because they know that in a male-oriented society, that would be seen as weakness.

Ergas highlights another reason why feminist movements do not always succeed in their political agenda. She argues that political parties have to focus their attention on the parts of society that can affect the economy or whose actions can influence the constituency. Furthermore, political parties need legitimacy to be able to continue their work and so they rely on powerful groups which can give them access to whatever kind of resource. The author then proceeds to state that women’s movements have never constituted a powerful group in terms of economic interests to take into consideration and so as soon as their moment of glory ends, politics go back to not care about that portion of society.

During the 1970s, Ergas explains that women had found new ways of getting their movements integrated into politics:

Women had gained access to political resources hitherto unavailable: they had been able to acquire some basic political skills and to generate leadership capacities; they had become part of associational networks and had had some access to the organizational resources of the New Left; they had acquired an ideology, which could motivate and justify their rebellion; and finally they were integrated into an international cultural circuit. (Ergas, 1982)

All things considered, the term feminist movement implies a lot of nuances and subcategories, each of which has its own agenda, whether it is political or social. Something that arose from

these scholars is that no social movement can bring change alone. Political institutions and actors have the civic and moral duty to include every section of society into the decision-making process of a state. Feminist movements have one thing in common, something that never changes in form or shape or time, and that is the message that equality is gender neutral. This could be a possible lesson to contemporary political actors in that this male-oriented way of doing politics is outdated and women deserve a spot at the table too.

According to some of the schools of thought explored above, feminist movements have been successful and can carry out their proposed policies for a number of different reasons. One way feminist movements can be politically successful is by collaborating with policy agencies specifically created to favor and welcome feminist policies. In fact, thanks to these agencies, feminist movements can become important key actors in the political arena. These agencies secure feminist movements with knowledge on how political procedures work and they help them build and shape their political demands in a more institutional way, in a more advanced way, so that they can reach their goals.

Another reason why feminist movements have exerted a lot of pressure onto political actors and institution is because their involvement equals more representation in the decision-making process of the state; therefore, the more social movements are made part of the political discourse, the more a state is democratic.

Another factor that plays a big role in how successful feminist movements is the support of left-wing political parties. These are important because they are constructed in a very similar ideological and organizational way to feminist movements. Moreover, these parties usually advocate for civil liberties, as social movements do, and they incorporate women in leadership positions in opposition to their right-wing parties.

According to this school of thought, beyond what is recounted above, other characteristics that make feminist movements successful include the level of economic and social resources within the movement. They would need to have a beneficial policy environment, including issue frame fit, openness of policy arenas, and weak countermovement.

Another school of thought places the success of feminist movements entirely on their being a cultural phenomenon rather than a political one. In this sense, women focus more on social changes. By focusing more on the cultural aspect of things, feminist movements had to shift their concerns towards a more subtle defensive position. Through this strategy, these feminist groups have achieved legal, social, and economic changes.

This was also the result of the cycle of the life of feminist movements according to which a feminist movement arises from a period of social turmoil; it develops and dies because of the new political equilibrium, and finally the movement is excluded from politics and can now focus only on smaller issues, with no policy relevance.

A counterargument to these schools of thoughts is offered by Ergas who argues that feminist movements are not as successful as most of the scholars state because they do not represent a powerful economic section of society; therefore, political actors, who are always more interested in finding the support of the people that can affect the economy, do not find any valid reason to back up feminist policy proposals.

Having established the theoretical framework, we turn once again to reviewing and analyzing the research uncovered regarding the influence of the feminist movement upon gender policy in the countries at hand.

Chapter 5: Abortion

This chapter will explore the issue of abortion in Italy, Norway, and the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, investigating how feminist movements affected the development of abortion policy.

United States

Abortion is one of the forefront issues in American political life. It started to make its way into the political agenda of the Democratic party in 1959. Since then, “it has claimed attention in every sort of political process: electoral, legislative, judicial and executive appointment, constitutional, political party, interest group, budgetary, administrative, federalist” (Stetson, 2002). Some call abortion the major battleground of the post-war era in the US, for it creates not only cultural division, but also religious, moral, and political division. When abortion was first broached on the American political stage, discussions concerned mainly the laws issued in the 19th century that criminalized abortion. The main difference between the 19th century and the 20th century feminist movements concerning abortion was the fact that the former was against the right to abortion—much like the contemporary “pro-life” movement—while the latter leaned more toward the “pro-choice” movement, therefore advocating for women’s right to abortion.

Starting in the 1960s, during the revival of the US feminist movement, the call for the legalization of abortion was a unifying issue that helped the movement develop in what we now

know and recognize. Feminist movements joined forces with smaller groups (such as focus groups on abortion laws) to form what we now know as “pro-choice” movement which consequently gave birth to two main organizations, one the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights action League (NARAL), and the other, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (Stetson, 2002). Throughout these years, political affiliation was a big part of the work of feminist movements; since abortion was a highly politicized issue and because it involved multiple organizations, the feminist movement needed help from women’s policy agencies in order to affect the government’s work. Besides political enemies, the feminist movement, especially the “pro-choice” wing of the movement, had one huge rival: the “pro-life” movement, which opposed every proposal or decision authorities made in favor of the right to abortion. This is mainly why the feminist movement needed the help from women’s policy agencies and other state actors; indeed, “the women’s rights advocates have periodically found allies inside the state who have made the difference between success and failure” (Stetson, 2002). Furthermore, according to Stetson, the allies that best helped ensure the interests of the feminist movement were state actors rather than women’s policy agencies, for they tended to be “weak and, at best, peripheral to the process” (Stetson, 2002). The movement, to ensure their demands to be heard, had to start a debate with four different government institutions: the Supreme Court, Congress, the President, and the state governments. The two main state actors who permitted the feminist movement and their policy agencies to take active participation in the political arena were Congress and the Supreme Court; the Congress allowed for hearings, while the Court allowed them to assist in cases as *amicus curiae*, a person or a group that is not a party to a case but who can assist a court hearing by offering information, expertise, or insight that has a bearing on the issue in the specific case.

Many debates about abortion took place in the US about abortion starting in 1960s and are still going on to the present day but, since this thesis focuses on the time frame between 1970s and 1980s, the discussion will concentrate on three main debates that took places during these years. First, the legalization of abortion leading to the Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*⁶ in 1973; second, the restriction of federal funding for abortions by Congress, the Hyde Amendment⁷ in 1977; and third, the Supreme Court rulings clarifying the scope and application of *Roe v. Wade* and the Hyde Amendment between 1976 and 1980.

The debate over abortion rights began to invade public arenas around 1960 when doctors started to complain about the restrictions on their medical judgement.⁸ This is why the American Law Institute issued its first reform law on abortion which expanded the conditions for therapeutic abortion (Stetson, 2002). Parallel to this, the feminist movement set as one of its first goals the “abortion on demand” initiative, advocating for a woman’s right to get an abortion while retaining her privacy, something that had been continuously violated under previous laws. Because seeking statutory change through judicial review seemed to have worked perfectly for the civil rights movement, the feminist movement decided to adopt the same strategy and women’s rights attorney decided to finally act against the discrimination towards women.

It was in 1971 that two feminist attorneys argued the case of *Roe v. Wade* before the Supreme Court, opening the doors to a much bigger debate on abortion. On the one hand, the challengers first argued that “illegal abortion was a problem because it violated individual privacy protected by the Constitution” (Stetson, 2002). Secondly, they argued that “illegal

⁶ *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), was a landmark Supreme Court case in which the Court held that the Constitution of the United States guarantees a pregnant woman's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion without undue government interference. (*Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973)).

⁷ The Hyde Amendment prohibits the use of federal funding to pay for abortions unless the woman's life is in danger or the pregnancy is the result of incest or abuse. (1976).

⁸ Abortion procedures had to be decided by a group of doctors, but individuals had no power.

abortion infringed on a physician's right to practice medicine without state interference" (Stetson, 2002). On the other hand, the defenders focused their argument on the humanity of the fetus.

Another important aspect of this case is that both parts, challengers and defenders, tried to gender the debate. Challengers attempted to do that by including medical groups, abortion reform groups, population groups, and women's movement organizations which highlighted an image of the woman as overwhelmed by the issue of abortion being illegal, and the consequent burden of involuntary pregnancy, resulting in the state owning the woman's body. The defenders instead gendered the debate by including the Americans United for Life and the National Right to Life Committee that together depicted women as "passive carriers of another human life" (Stetson, 2002). Moreover, challengers argued that women and men had equal responsibility in conceiving a child, but that women had to carry that decision alone, while defenders argued that even though the mother had the free will of her own life, she was also responsible for the life of the fetus and future baby.

Finally, the Court's decision "established guidelines for states' regulation of abortion, waiving restrictions until the third trimester of the pregnancy" (Stetson, 2002). This decision was paramount in the debate on abortion, for it set the hierarchy of interests where women's privacy came first, then came the doctors' professional status, and third came the state's interests. In this Court ruling the state gave space to women's movements in that they were accepted into the "judicial policy process" (Stetson, 2002). Going back to the role of women's policy agencies, the only agency allowed in the debate was the Secretary's Advisory Committee on the Rights and Responsibilities of Women appointed by the Federal Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. However, this committee was not independent and therefore was very low in the

hierarchy and did not dispose of any private funds. Even though the Committee declared the right of women to decide whether to get an abortion or not, it did not take part in the constitutional debate, reinforcing the idea that women's policy agencies had a marginal role in the achievement of the court's landmark decision.

The path towards the Hyde Amendment, the restriction of federal funding for abortions by Congress in 1977, was a follow up of *Roe v. Wade* in that the "pro-life" movement refused to settle and decided that, even though women had the right to get an abortion, they could not use federal funding to fund the operation. The amendment was proposed on the floor of the annual appropriations bill for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. For this reason, feminist movements and overall individuals could not participate in the debate over the approval or denial of this amendment. Advocates of the Hyde Amendment of course opposed legal abortion and the victimology shifted from women to taxpayers, arguing that people were being forced to pay taxes and indirectly support something they were against. They also argued that women do have a right to choose what to do with their own bodies, but that freedom ends when that same body is carrying a fetus. On the other hand, opponents of the Hyde Amendment defended the decision of *Roe v. Wade* and argued that denying federal funds for abortions would mainly affect poor women and deny them one of their constitutional rights. As it was for *Roe v. Wade*, the debate for the Hyde Amendment was also focused on gender. Proponents depicted women as mothers who had to devote their lives to their children before and after birth, while opponents depicted images of poor women forced to carry unwanted pregnancies to term. The Supreme Court ruled that the "government was under no constitutional obligation to help women get abortions" (Stetson, 2002); indeed "*Roe v. Wade* did not declare an unqualified constitutional right to an abortion" (Stetson, 2002). The approval of the Hyde Amendment was a huge failure

for the women's movement; most government actors, among which the President, supported the decision of Supreme Court and to questions on the fairness of funding restrictions on poor women, he replied that "there are many things in life that are not fair" (Stetson, 2002). Major women's groups participated in the public discussion, but they did not gain access to the policy process; indeed, their voices were circulated in the news but disregarded by the political actors. As a result, the approval of the Hyde Amendment was a dismissal of the requests made by movement advocates. Throughout the political debate on the Hyde Amendment, women's policy agencies did not really have a say, except for the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year that had very little to no power. The Commission put forth a number of propositions, but the remaining recommendations for the commission was disbanded soon after (Stetson, 2002). Overall, their efforts to have a say in the political debate remained marginal.

In the 20th century, American abortion discourse was affected by "morality concerns, population control, fertility regulation, maternal health, and cultural norms" (Doan, 2007). In the beginning, women were not allowed to be part of the debate over the right to abortion, especially since the debate was started by doctors and physicians who thought their freedom of choice was being affected by the State. Later on, starting in the 1960s, women began to change their social status by "delaying marriage, attending college, and entering the labor force in unprecedented rates" (Doan, 2007). With this advancement, two completely different views began to develop: one was the traditional perspective, where family was central to the fulfillment of the individual self. According to this view, "adhering to specified male and female roles preserves the integrity of the family and, in turn, society" (Doan, 2007). The other one highlighted the role of the individual and the importance of the individual's rights and freedom. With the exploration of

individuals' rights, women started to be able to join the debate and even small women's groups began to get involved; for example, the Society for Human Abortions and the women's group Jane organized marches to protest and to advocate for their rights. Specifically, Jane instructed its members to perform abortions for women who were in need. The role that the feminist movement was playing in that moment was of raising awareness and of demonstrating how reproductive rights were a fundamental element to reach women's equality. Feminist movements tried to reframe the issue of abortion and to erase all negative connotations attached to the concept, succeeding in bringing the discourse into the public arena. One of the first steps that laid the ground for Roe v. Wade was the addition of reproductive rights to the bill of rights of the National Organization for Women in 1967 (Doan, 2007).

Italy

The legal, political, cultural, and historical system around the issue of abortion in Italy is the reflection of how Italy's two souls, the secular and the religious one, collide. After centuries of discrimination against women, finally in 1946 with the referendum that made Italy a republic, women were given the right to vote as they were now recognized to be citizens. From this moment, women could finally partake in political decisions and processes. Until 1978, when the law legalizing abortion was approved, performing an abortion was of course illegal and it was frowned upon not only legally but also culturally; indeed, the Pope, even though not possessing official political power, exerted a huge amount of power over Italy's political arena and successfully influenced public issues, such as abortion. To counter the culture that characterized for centuries the Italian peninsula, strong social movements, often tied to left-wing parties, started to demand equal rights and to advocate for women's freedom. When feminist movements

in Italy started to advocate for the right to abortion, that was a signal that they had emancipated themselves from the political parties they were affiliated with, even though a small percentage of women (that also belonged to the feminist movement) still collaborated with political parties with the hope of institutionalizing gender policies. Finally, abortion was legally recognized by law no. 194, entitled *Norme per la tutela Sociale della Maternità e sull'Interruzione Volontaria della Gravidanza*⁹ (Calloni, 2002). Unfortunately, women's policy agencies did not exist in Italy until the 1980s; indeed, one of the first agencies to emerge, the *Commissione per le Pari Opportunità fra Uomini e Donne*¹⁰ stayed far away from the feminist movement's battle of defending the legality of abortion. This section analyzes two cases, first the legalization of abortion in 1978, and second the popular referendum to repeal legal abortion in 1981.

During the 1970s, in Italy, civil rights movements had to navigate between the secular and the religious Catholic society where women lived in a patriarchal structure, denying them the possibility of self-determination. Feminist movements and women's groups debated over work and family and the role that the woman had in these two realms; indeed, before the law on abortion was approved, a long list of other gender issues had to be dealt with, among which were laws concerning divorce. The modern concept of family recognized that both men and women had the same rights and duties; this led to open the debate on abortion: if men could walk away from undesired pregnancies, why couldn't women? In 1971 the first proposal to decriminalize abortion entered the Italian Parliament thanks to a socialist, Loris Fortuna; it took 7 years before the Italian Constitutional Court declared that denying women the right to abortion was unconstitutional and therefore forced the Parliament to finally approve, in 1978, the law that would decriminalize abortion. This heated debate was the outcome of a decade of continuous

⁹ *trans.* Norms for the Social Protection of Motherhood and about the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy.

¹⁰ *trans.* Commission for Equal Opportunity between Men and Women.

social change, throughout which leftwing parties, together with activists from the women's movement, initiated discussions about the role of the woman that shifted from being marginal to being central to society. The debate on abortion rights not only furthered the shifting of the role of the woman, but it also allowed for new female identities to be formed and to affirm and establish feminism as a public discourse.

The first feminist group who stated their position regarding the right to abortion in 1971 was *Rivolta Femminile*;¹¹ they were followed by the *Movimento per la Liberazione della Donna*¹² and the *Fronte Italiano di Liberazione Femminile*..¹³ The way these groups imposed themselves on the Italian societal and political arena was by making sure their voices were heard; they did so by initiating “a plan to confess to having had an abortion” (Calloni, 2002), which was inspired by the *Manifesto* published in France. A small, yet important, part of the Italian feminist movement, these groups collectively argued that the law on abortion was yet another way of controlling women's bodies and choices in a patriarchal society, so they published the feminist magazine *Sottosopra* along these lines, to denounce and to advocate for their rights: “There needs to be an abandonment of a sexual culture, which legitimizes the existing procreative structure; abortion is any solution for a free woman because women continued to be colonized by the patriarchal system” (Calloni, 2002).

Achieving the decriminalization of abortion was a success for the Italian feminist movement but it is also important to point out that without the help of the left-wing political parties it would have been impossible to successfully accomplish what the women's groups wanted. If, on the political side, political parties were the main actors and the main aid that

¹¹ *trans.* Women's Revolt.

¹² *trans.* Women's Liberation Movement.

¹³ *trans.* Italian Women's Liberation Front.

feminist movements had, the women's movements were the ones that mobilized the civil society. Together, women's movements and politicians worked closely to support the approval of the law, even by organizing street demonstrations. Although the law decriminalizing abortion was a huge victory for women all over Italy, many radical women's groups were disappointed and felt like women were not completely free from state control. The feminist movement of the 1970s, the one that successfully started the emancipation process for women, was a new movement, a movement that was split between those who belonged to political parties and trade unions, and those who called themselves autonomous from politics and identified with smaller, local realities. The latter emphasized the issue of self-determination, they aimed at completely emancipating women from the state control.

If there is something that keeps repeating itself in history it is that what women accomplish is never to be taken for granted, because it never lasts forever. This is the case with the abortion law; indeed, as soon as the law was approved, multiple parties, pushed by the Catholic Church and the religious sector of Italian society, started thinking of ways to dismantle it. This is what led to the 1981 referendum to repeal legal abortion. In 1980, a year before the referendum was held, there were seven different referendum requests, the most radical one asking for the complete annulment of the law on abortion, the least radical one asking to modify the law so to make it more restrictive. The Constitutional Court rejected the most radical proposal on the basis that if the law on abortion had been approved it meant that it had been conceived to be constitutional in the first place. Therefore, the only proposal that was submitted to voters was the least radical that called for more restrictions, allowing for abortion only for therapeutic reasons. The pro-life advocates argued that there was the need to advance the interests of the fetus since they could not speak for themselves. Women's movements all

throughout Italy moved to organize initiatives and marches to defeat the referendum; their fear was to see everything they had worked so hard for getting lost all over again and that “the hard-won compromise would be thrown aside by a new conflict on this hot topic in Italian civil and political society” (Calloni, 2002).

79% of voters expressed their dissent in the referendum, bringing the “no” to a win; the law to decriminalize abortion was safe. This win urged feminist movements and women’s groups to organize and reinforce welfare services where women’s rights could be protected. What the outcome of the referendum ultimately meant was that not only was the law legitimate, but that there was an incumbent need to apply it and to make sure everyone respected it. Protests and marches to protect the law became also stages where women’s groups could exchange opinions and discuss how to implement the law; they were also strengthened by the approval of a society that had expressed its solidarity through the referendum. Data shows that the main reason why people voted in favor of women was because of the mobilization of feminist movements and their ability to convince masses. The feminist movement that made this success possible was one that developed throughout a decade and that was continuously growing. The campaign to protect abortion was the last political campaign the Italian feminist movement ever undertook. Indeed, “while this referendum campaign demonstrated the increasing capacity of women for public mobilization, at the same time it marked a change in the politics of mass feminism” (Calloni, 2002).

Advocating for the right to abortion was important not only because of political and cultural and social reasons, it was important also because of health reasons. In 1974, a survey by Panorama, an Italian magazine, produced enough data to show that there were between “800,000 and 3 million women receiving illegal abortions in a year” (Mills, 2020). Indeed, “illegal

abortion clinics were seeing more women in their centers than actual health clinics” (Mills, 2020). The Italian feminist movement started out fragmented, with little groups scattered and with different priorities, but one thing they all had in common was the overall tension with the Italian political arena given that male-dominated political parties were completely at odds with what the feminist movement was advocating for. However, to make sure their agenda was fulfilled, feminist movements had to partner up with political parties, especially left-wing ones.

When it came to abortion, left-wing parties took different approaches to the issue and they overall disappointed the feminist movement and its activists in that they were aiming at broader goals, at broader freedoms. For example, the Communist Party, famous in supporting the feminist movement, had a more conservative approach and “asserted the need to provide more general reforms in housing, nurseries, and health as the way to tackle abortion” (Mills, 2020). On the other hand, more radical left-wing parties such as the “Party of Proletarian Unity,” *Avanguardia Operaia*¹⁴ and the *Lotta Continua*¹⁵ focused on legalizing abortion while also addressing other social issues such as class disparity and the effect of that on access to abortion services. The extreme left party *Democrazia Proletaria*¹⁶ proposed a bill that would have made it possible for women to get an abortion up to the ninth month of the pregnancy; however, even though the proposed bill allowed for complete freedom, feminist groups were not content and refused it, arguing that the bill was an attempt at “equating individual control to external agency” (Mills, 2020). Moreover, women’s groups despised the idea that the bill would be viewed as the unique effort of the party rather than the general struggle of the feminist movement. To comment on the bill, a woman who belonged to the feminist movement was interviewed by *Effe*, an Italian

¹⁴ *trans.* Avant-Garde Workers.

¹⁵ *trans.* Fight Continues.

¹⁶ *trans.* Proletarian Democracy.

magazine and she stated that the bill “doesn’t mean confirming women’s freedom, it means saying women’s lives are shit anyway and that it makes no difference if they have to destroy another life or kill themselves because of it” (Mills, 2020).

Throughout the years of the Italian abortion debate something very clear emerged: feminist movements needed political parties and political affiliation to fulfill their agenda, but that did not mean they agreed with what the political arena had to offer; indeed, “they were averse to the idea that relying on governing institutions to formulate their own abortion centered proposals would produce an ideal reproductive landscape for women in Italy” (Mills, 2020). In addition to the legal battle, the Italian feminist movement decided to establish clinics where it was safe to perform and get abortions; it was right there and then that the *consultori*¹⁷ were born. In these clinics women were provided with medical and social care; one of these places, the *Comitato Romano per L’Aborto e la Contraccezione*,¹⁸ organized grassroots campaigns to raise awareness on how abortion was not only a legal issue, but also a social one and how the decriminalization of it would have constituted a “tool of liberation” (Mills, 2020). A central element of this new feminine ideology was that it was important to share this ideology through the “engagement of women in both their personal lives and political struggles” (Mills, 2020), this was also one of the roles of the newly established *consultori*; this new feminism “acknowledged the presence and unwavering influence of the state but never allowed it to define or control their formative principles or actions” (Mills, 2020).

¹⁷ *trans.* Free Clinic.

¹⁸ *trans.* Roman Committee for Abortion and Contraception.

Norway

The Norwegian feminist movement was able to advocate for the right to abortion and to push the issue into the agendas of different political parties, an agenda that led to the legalization of abortion in 1978. At the same time, in contrast with the progressive activism of the time, another group of advocates was trying to settle in the new political arena: Popular Action against Self-determined Abortion was a group that strongly opposed any attempt at creating a law to protect abortion, until they were outvoted in 1978.

When abortion discourse started to enter the Norwegian political arenas, very few people took into consideration the social factors and deemed only the medical element important for considering the revision of abortion laws. The Women Secretariat section in the Labour Party tried to bring the concept and the right to self-determination in a new law that would give more willpower to women but failed; this happened because “even if self-determined abortion had its supporters at the end of the 1960’s, the political will in important organizations was absent” (Enge, 2018). Things took a turn in 1969 when, in view of the general elections, feminist movements all around the nation demanded the right to self-determination to be added to the political campaign and agenda of the Women’s Secretariat; they refused the proposal but instead opted for the full liberalization of abortion. The majority of Congress, although mainly composed by men, approved the idea of women having the full control over their bodies; therefore, the right to abortion was not on the list of the political program of one of the largest and most influential parties in Norway. This achievement was the first of many successes and advances the feminist movement achieved in Norway during the 1970s, a decade full of social changes. What happened in Norway during those years paved the way for the law on the legalization of abortion; the changes did not concern only political revolutions but also social in

that gender norms were abolished (not by the entire society of course) and a new generation of politicized women demanded their civil rights.

What prompted the birth of new feminist movements in Norway was the visit of American Jo Freeman in 1970, a prominent defender of the American feminist movement, who was left in disbelief after noticing how Norway was such a gender-divided country. Because Jo Freeman was such an important figure of the American feminist movement, Norwegian women's groups looked up at her for guidance. Consequently, what this new wave demanded was the "emancipation from suppression and marginal gender roles" (Enge, 2018), and, because the Norwegian feminist movement as a whole was a large social movement, they were able to "change public opinions on what a woman could be and do and what she could strive for" (Enge, 2018).

The political elections of 1973 were elections charged with feminist issues such as reproductive rights and wage gap; every feminist organization was marching and protesting to make sure their voices were heard, but their requests remained unanswered until later in the decade. For centuries women were legally punished if they underwent an abortion, until the beginning of the 20th century, at which point abortions were still illegal unless it was a threat for the health of the mother. All abortions had to be reported to a board comprised of doctors and physicians. The first woman to oppose this state of affairs was Katti Anker Møller, Norway's first spokeswoman for the liberalization of abortion laws. Before abortion was decriminalized, 50 years would have to pass.

The major group that shaped the 1970s and the second wave feminism in Norway was called the "New Feminist" group. They inherited activists from past movements and made sure that issues that before that were only "women's issues" became political issues and added them

to the political agenda of all left-wing parties across the nation. Indeed, their slogan was “the personal is political” for they believed in the process of “making issues, previously seen as personal matters, as political demands, visible in the public sphere”¹⁹ (Enge, 2018). The movement started out as an ensemble of smaller local groups with no political affiliation, preferring a more spiritual approach, creating communities where a large variety of professionals could engage and help the movement in their next steps; there were physicians, doctors, lawyers, philosophers whose skills combined “were useful in developing knowledge, arguments and strategy in the early 1970s” (Enge, 2018). The first protest sponsored by the New Feminist movement was held on March 4, 1971 at Aker Hospital; protesters held posters to protest the hard and painful bureaucratic process women had to go through to get an abortion. Posters read “We demand human treatment of the abortion-seeking,” “Equality before the (abortion) law,” and “The abortion law is a lottery” (Enge, 2018); after the protest, the forms that women had to fill out were changed and had fewer questions to assess eligibility.

When fighting for the right to abortion, the Norwegian feminist movement also had to think of the patriarchal structure that they had to dismantle in order to be able to advance their agenda. To do so, another movement was born, the “New Women’s Front”; this new group was meant to be a more politically active group than the New Feminist group. They needed to create a political platform with political goals to be achieved; of course, one of the political issues they wanted to discuss was the right to contraception and free abortion. Finally, in 1973 they officially became a mass organization and “the radical demands could be transformed to political action in a much more effective way than the flat structure of the New Feminists had allowed for” (Enge, 2018). On the issue of abortion, the New Feminists and the New Women’s front

¹⁹ This sentence was also engaged by many feminist groups across the world. (Kelly, 2017)

decided to create a partnership, although it was never officialized; they both built and shared a resolution that called for the right to abortion as a fundamental element for the liberation of women from the patriarchal society, they also demanded the Labour Party to accelerate their legislative proposal for the right to abortion. The years that followed saw a lot of law proposals being rejected and the issue of abortion passing in second place and always set aside. Another reason why no party was raising the problem of abortion was because there was no majority that would have assured the passing of the law, therefore, no party wanted to be responsible for such a controversial issue. The New Feminists organized an abortion day five months before the general elections of 1973 where activists approached passers-by and informed them about their proposal for an abortion law. Unfortunately, all the efforts of the Norwegian feminist movement were not enough; the law to decriminalize abortion and to allow for abortion on demand would not come until 1978.

Chapter 6: Wage Gap

This Chapter will explore the issue of wage gap in Italy, Norway, and the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, investigating how the feminist movement affected the development of such policy.

United States

Social changes in the US brought also changes in the economic status of women. During the 20th century, women went from occupying a very small section of the labor force to almost doubling their influence, as well as increasing their level of education. With the increase of working women, the salary gap also narrowed; it was 37% in the 1960s and then 33% in the 1980s (Mandel & Semyonov, 2014); this decline happened especially during the 1970s when feminist movements demanded more equality in all aspects of a woman's life.

However, despite the continuous efforts of women's groups and agencies, "a substantial sex differential in wages has persisted in the United States for at least 4 decades" (O'Neill, 1985). The wage gap issue has also been a political issue, occupying a central debate position among advocacy groups and women's agencies which led to more radical regulations and legislation. For example, during the 1970s, a movement that advocated for equal pay rights was born and they demanded "upward adjustments of pay scales for traditionally female jobs" (O'Neill, 1985). The American Feminist movement also created a slogan, "59 cents out of every dollar" (O'Neill, 1985), which is how much women earned compared to men for both full-time and part-time jobs.

Norway

Something that emerged from the study of how the Norwegian feminist movement dealt with social issues is that, instead of donating all of their social capital to one issue at a time, they created different sections for different issues that together would bring on the general agenda. This is how the labour movement was born; it was a section of the feminist movement focused on salary disparity based on gender and all other discrimination women had to undergo in the workplace. The labour movement obtained some successes and advances by working closely with the employers' union, bargaining what was best for women. Although Norway now ranks at the top of the countries with a very narrow wage gap, it was not always so. Starting in the 1960s, women occupied a very low portion of the Norwegian workforce compared to other European countries (Karki, 2012). Things started to change with the development of the second wave feminism in the 1970s when women's role in society began to shift and a new gender discourse was undertaken. What made women join the workforce in mass was the possible partnership with the Labour Party, which was already working with the Feminist Movement to advance women's rights, not only in the workplace but in all aspects of a woman's life.

Italy

Internationally, the 1970s saw equal pay become a fundamental issue driving the elimination of gender disparities. Each country handled their own national policies differently, also collaboratively creating international standards; for example, in 1975, the Declaration on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Women Workers (Betti, 2020) was created. Italy is

one of those countries that let the international political arena dictate its national policies with the help of women's groups.

There are three main political actors that shaped the equal pay debate in Italy: the Parliament, trade unions, and women's groups. Coming from the Fascist Era, the country was divided into two. On the one hand, there were women that promoted their socially accepted way of life, being secluded in their homes; on the other hand, there were women that advocated and demanded for their rights to be paid equally (Betti, 2020). Even though it may seem like Italy did not want to grant rights to women, it is important to notice that in the Constitution drafted in 1948, Article 37 states that "a woman worker has the same rights, and, for equal work, the same pay as a man" (Betti, 2020). The mobilization to demand equal pay started in the 1950s with two women leaders of the group, Teresa Noce and Marisa Rodano, who both belonged to the Communist Party. Noce was "a leading trade unionist at national and international level" (Betti, 2020), while Rodano was "a high ranking official and President of the Union of Italian Women" (Betti, 2020). They both put forth the idea that women should be paid equally and that no discrimination on the workplace was allowed based on gender disparities. However, in 1950s, equal pay was not at the top of the list of the Italian political arena and very few people actually supported the idea of the elimination of wage gap. The partnership that started to change things was that between the left-wing women's associations and the Catholic women's associations; indeed, they demanded and advocated for "regulations for the application of equal remuneration between women and men workers for work of equal value" (Betti, 2020). Unfortunately, they lacked support from the parliament and the proposal never became law. Finally, after more than a decade, in 1977, the law establishing complete equality between men and women in the

workplace was passed, once again thanks to a woman, the first woman to be appointed as
Ministry of Labour, Tina Anselmi.

Chapter 7: Parental Leave

This chapter will explore the issue of parental leave in Norway, Italy, and the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, investigating how feminist movements affected the development of such policy.

In the international community parental leave can be conceived as family right, individual right, and a non-transferable individual right. Overall, since the introduction of parental and maternity leave, women's employment rates have been affected most by the duration of the leave; indeed, "the extension of leave duration contributes to an increase in female employment up to a certain limit, after which employment rates are negatively affected by additional extensions of leave" (Thévenon & Solaz, 2013). In contrast, the extension of leave does not affect male employment. Something that stands out from the data is that if paternal leave has a positive effect on male employment, as well as an extension of that leave of two years has no remarkable effects on male employment, the same extension has a very negative impact on female employment, widening gender disparities.

Norway

Norway was the first country to provide gender neutral parental leave in the 1970s. This fact rests on one of the core values of Norway's welfare state: egalitarianism. According to Norway's parental leave system, there are different sections of the leave differentiated based on the gender and a longer leave then can be shared between parents. Norway started off in the 1970s with a leave that lasted a whole year with just 18 weeks paid. This first leave policy was reserved for mothers, women in general, so that female employment rates could still go up. A

new reform introduced in 1977 changed things and allowed for both parents to use 12 out of the 18 weeks (Brandth & Kvande, 2009). This also led to a social shift, from thinking that women were the only ones that had to stay behind and care for their kids, to put fathers on the same level.

United States and Italy

What shaped both the US and the Italian parental leave policies was the idea that a family “was supposed to consist of a married couple – one male breadwinner and one female homemaker – and their children, and the wages of a man were assumed to be enough to support a wife and children” (Henneck, 200). However, things started to change during the second half of the 20th century, with the help of new and more progressive women’s groups; by the end of the century the terms “worker” and “mother” lost any gender attributes and became gender neutral. Throughout these years, divorce became a law too and divorce rates went up, meaning that society could no longer assume women to be able to depend on their husbands forever. This brought the state to find ways to let women be parents and workers at the same time; with politicians and women’s groups joining forces, both Italy and the US saw the birth of the parental leave policy.

The US and Italy chose different ways to help families in childcare. The US does very little to subsidize women who decide to step away from work and at the same time offers little to no help to women who decide to stay in the workforce and also care for their families. Italy on the other hand encourages women to drop out of work while helping them financially. The definition of parental leave states that “it is the most basic entitlement for working women,

requiring employers to give workers their jobs back after taking necessary time off to give birth” (Henneck, 2003).

The US is a country that has little political commitment to helping working families, making parental leave a perk and not a right. According to data, “59% of women with children under one year are employed” (Henneck, 2003), which means that American family policy is not insufficient because people don’t need it, but because policymakers do not think that this is a priority. The first and only parental leave policy is to be found in the 1990s with the Family and Medical Leave Act, which “requires that those who employ 50 or more workers offer up to 12 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave for pregnancy and childbirth” (Henneck, 2003); however, data shows that a very low percentage of workers actually take this time, for they cannot afford the loss of pay.

The Italian effort in providing parental leave is threatened by regional discrepancies; however, family policies is a topic that has always stayed at the top of the political agenda. If, on one hand, the state encourages women to leave work with a paid maternity leave that can last up to 8 years, but on the other hand, public childcare is very scarce and undeveloped, women are forced to take the maternity leave even if they do not want to. This is why “Italian women’s labor force participation rates are low compared to the rest of Europe” (Henneck, 2003). According to Italian law, maternity leave is paid 80% for the first five months and then the supplementary parental leave is paid 30% for the following 10 months; both these leaves are paid by the employer, with no state help, and as a consequence very few people end up taking any leave to avoid being a burden on their employer.

Chapter 8: Interview Analysis

This chapter will present qualitative data based on ethnographic interviews with women affected by—and often active in—the feminist movements in Italy, Norway and America.

To start off the interview, Ms. Giacobbe, President of the International feminist federative association (AFFI), gave me a brief overview of what she deemed important about the Italian feminist movement. She mentioned the “Manifesto di Rivolta Femminile” signed by Carla Lonzi, Elvira Benotti, e Carla Accardi in 1970; this manifesto marked the beginning of second wave feminism in Italy and posed as central the need for women to have the right to self-determination, and the need for the patriarchal society to stop making decisions about women’s bodies and conscience. This is also why the 1970s saw a consistent increase in women’s groups. The groups featured an ensemble of social classes because women’s issues were a common issue; no one was spared. For women to start acknowledging the oppression they were suffering from the patriarchal society meant that the political arena had to come to terms with it too. Women’s voices were becoming too loud to be overlooked.

To express into words what Italian women were experiencing, Ms. Giacobbe cited Carla Lonzi who stated that “*Abbiamo guardato per quattromila anni, adesso finalmente abbiamo visto*”²⁰ (I. Giacobbe, personal communication, March 22, 2021). To the question of whether or not she believed that feminist movements needed a political affiliation to fulfill their agenda, Ms. Giacobbe said that she believed feminist movements did not need a political affiliation, that is something for men. She further expanded on the issue by identifying the moment women were allowed in the political arena, 1946. From that year on, women could not only vote, but they

²⁰ *trans.* We have watched for four thousand years, now we have finally seen.

could also be elected to a public office. The 21 women elected in the elections 1946 belonged to different parties, nonetheless, they took all part in the writing process of the Italian Constitution, fighting for women's rights together, no matter their political affiliation of the time.

According to Ms. Giacobbe, the reason why women and accordingly women's groups did and do not need political affiliation is because women vote and advocate for their beliefs and for their gender, not to align themselves with party lines. On the effectiveness of the policies introduced thanks to the help of the feminist movement, Ms. Giacobbe was clear; she thinks Italy has a very advanced, strong legislative protection for women, but when it comes to applying these same laws, people do not enforce them and the protection fades away, year after year. The reason behind this is that when women win, that is never forever; why? Because "*le conquiste delle donne sono una lotta con il patriarcato che cerca sempre di riprendersi le posizioni che perde*"²¹ (I. Giacobbe, personal communication, March 22, 2021).

When I asked Ms. Giacobbe to further explore gender policies in Italy and whether the country was progressive or not in this sense, she started the conversation by saying that the only article in the Italian Constitution that starts with the word "woman" is article 37: "*La donna lavoratrice ha gli stessi diritti e, a parità di lavoro, le stesse retribuzioni che spettano al lavoratore. Le condizioni di lavoro devono consentire l'adempimento della sua essenziale funzione familiare e assicurare alla madre e al bambino una speciale adeguata protezione*"²² (I. Giacobbe, personal communication, March 22, 2021).

²¹ *trans.* "Women's victories are a fight with the patriarchy that is constantly trying to take back the positions it lost."

²² *trans.* "The worker woman has the same rights and, for the same work, the same wages that are due to the worker. Working conditions must allow for the fulfillment of his essential family function and ensure special adequate protection for the mother and child."

Overall, Italy is in last place for women's employment, wage gap, and parental leave. The reason behind this seems to be a stable in the critic towards Italy's gender policies, the written policy is there but no one enforces it. To conclude our conversation, Ms. Giacobbe moved to explore a more personal approach and understanding of the Italian feminist movement. She argued that the efficacy of women's groups is unquestionable, without them women would still be viewed as families' caregivers.

The second Italian woman I interviewed was Gianna Urizio, a journalist for RAI. What I learned from the interview with Ms. Urizio was greatly in line with what Ms. Giacobbe had previously said. When the feminist movement started to take off in Italy, women had to fight against thousands of years of patriarchal society. She argued that gender disparities were subtle; for example, even if laws set men and women's salaries to be the same, women never reached the same positions as men, so they were underpaid, and wage gap widened. When asked about the development of the feminist movement, Ms. Urizio explained that, for her at least, the feminist movement and its values remained stuck in the 1970s, unable to move forward and to adapt to the ongoing changes the political arena was experiencing. She argued that, even though women's groups were able to make some big changes in the Italian legislative sphere, those same changes are worth nothing when powerful groups of men continuously endanger and threatens those advancements. Four thousand years of patriarchal society are difficult to overcome. She firmly believes that even now, 50 years later, Italy is still a patriarchal society oppressing women (G. Urizio, personal communication, March 24, 2021).

Ms. Urizio also compared the Italian feminist movement to other feminist movements scattered around the globe and stated that, although around the world women's groups promoted the concepts of emancipation and freedom, the Italian movement focused more on the freedom

discourse, as if Italian women were already emancipated, when they were not. Ms. Urizio agreed with Ms. Giacobbe when she was asked about the feminist movement and political affiliation, arguing that women's groups did and do not need an affiliation with a political party to fulfill their agenda; however, she added that now, in the contemporary political arena, the feminist movement is not present and it is not represented in political issues, but now there are only single, independent women inside their parties, who have to represent the whole gender and all they advocate for. Furthermore, she supported Ms. Giacobbe's claim that even though Italy has a very strong and robust legislative defense of women's rights, the actual implementation of the former is inexistent and therefore all of the struggles are worth very little; to use a metaphor as representation of the Italian situation, Ms. Urizio compares Italy to a cotton ball that slips into your hand even when you think you finally have control over it.

The first Norwegian woman I interviewed was Beatrice Halsaa, political scientist, gender studies expert and feminist. My conversation with Professor Halsaa began with her telling me about the Norwegian feminist movement and the second wave in the 1960s. She told me that the new feminists' groups were made of women that had just come back from the US, inspired from what the US feminist movement was doing overseas. Various organizations were born during those first years, for example, the Women's Front, a more Marxist-Lenist organization (B. Halsaa, personal communication, March 4th, 2021). In addition to old feminist movements, Professor Halsaa also stated that there were different groups, such as the trade union, that joined forces with women's groups to make a change. In the 1970s women learned new ways of depicting themselves, and they "debated about gender relations generally in all kinds of contexts in political parties, trade unions, universities" (B. Halsaa, personal communication, March 4th, 2021).

She then moved on to explore the relationship between feminist movements and political affiliation; she stated that there were some differences between the old and the new Norwegian feminist movement in this regard. If, on one hand, the older movements had always been in close contact with political parties, on the other hand, newer movements were more interested in social changes rather than policy changes. However, Professor Halsaa believes that the women's movement has had an impact on public policy, even if their goals were social. Indeed, she further expands on this topic by explaining that since Norway is a quite small country, politics and social groups have a close relationship, meaning that there is a partnership between the two. Therefore, social issues are often discussed as political matters in Parliament; for example, the abortion issue was widely discussed and supported by politicians and political parties across the whole political spectrum. Professor Halsaa then advanced the idea that Norway is in the forefront on several gender policies such as family leave and abortion rights.

The second Norwegian woman I interviewed was Hilde Inntjore, Dean at the University of Agder. Dean Inntjore added very interesting insights to my conversation with Professor Halsaa. She argued that the feminist movement that we know now is the outcome of what was created in the 1970s. She argued that a huge milestone that the Norwegian feminist movement reached was the Gender Equality Act in 1978; it was aimed at promoting equality between sexes, and at improving especially the condition of women. For the feminist movement to have put the issue of inequality in a law was so important because society is used to live according to laws, and these dictate how we want society to be or not to be (H. Inntjore, personal communication, March 2, 2021). During the 1970s, Norway reached another milestone in its history with the election of the first female Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, a very important prominent politician who played a fundamental role in the evolution of women's rights. With Dean Inntjore

we once again touched on how the feminist movement related itself to politics. She explained that especially during the 1970s and 1980s, political affiliation was a core element of the Norwegian feminist movement in that politics was the only public stage for women's groups to advance their demands and advocate for their rights. In addition, she also supports Professor Halsaa's claim that the contemporary feminist movement does not need or want political help to fulfill their agenda. On whether Norway is progressive or not in terms of gender policies, Dean Inntjore argued that, even if for reproductive rights and parental leave Norway has a good legislative body, for wage gap things are different. She further expanded on this by describing research she had conducted to investigate wage gap in students that graduated from the same type of school and obtained the same job. She found out that men were paid more than women, something she found astonishing. Overall, she thinks that from a foreigner's point of view, Norway can be seen as a progressive country, but from a national's perspective there is still a lot to do to reach gender equality.

The first American woman I talked to was Patricia Rieker, Professor of Sociology at Boston University. My conversation with Professor Rieker started with her remembering what it was like to participate in the 1970s women's strike for peace and equality, an important moment in the history of the American feminist movement. Professor Rieker also believes that the movement needed, and still needs, the support of political parties. One way the feminist movement got the attention of the political arena was through public demonstrations, during which their message became so prominent no one could look the other side anymore.

Throughout our conversation, Professor Rieker expressed her disappointment in the lack of legislation present in the United States to provide gender equality. She argued that there is huge gender inequity in all spheres of life; advances have been made but not nearly enough has

been done to enforce any of the progressive legislations put in place. She expressed disappointment that the few progressive laws and policies in place in the country are constantly attacked and opposed by different political parties. For example, even though a law protecting women's reproductive rights exists, the Supreme Court, with the current composition, constantly decreases the efficacy of the law (P. Rieker, personal communication, February 10, 2021). Ensuring these laws are implemented, she continues, is like full-time work, so there are not many people ready to take on this responsibility; for example, once the US government approved the Violence Act, it took ten years to actually put money into the project, and they did only because there was a women's group that insisted and organized protests. Professor Rieker concluded our conversation saying that "the women's movement and the feminist movement had to be eternally vigilant about legislation and policy, so getting an Act to pass was one thing but how it got implemented was a whole different thing and that always required much more effort between activist and policy-makers" (P. Rieker, personal communication, February 10, 2021).

The second American woman I have talked to was Kate Stockly, Professor at Boston University. The conversation I had with Professor Stockly was beyond extraordinary; she decided to tell me the story of the unexplored part of feminist movement. Most people interested in the movement stop at the surface of what Stockly described as a big iceberg mainly covered by water. Beyond the ranks of white, middle-class women, there was a great deal of work that was happening in other communities, in African American communities and Latina groups. All of these groups overlapped; women from all over the country with a wide range of backgrounds tried to work together towards a common goal but at the same time they had very different projects because they had different needs and concerns of which the others were unaware of. All

of the techniques and strategies used by the feminist movement were taken from the civil rights movement that had just had its boom in the previous years.

Professor Stockly then introduced me to a book written by Betty Friedan called “The Feminine Mystique” which is viewed as the beginning of second wave feminism in the US. “Her book was incredibly important in raising consciousness, just kind of like helping women see themselves in their lives in a new light” (K. Stockly, personal communication, February 19, 2021). She went on to talk about the Equal Rights amendment which would prohibit the denial of civil rights based on sex; Congress passed it without hesitation, but the text was never ratified by the states, so it never became a law. Another important figure for the American feminist movement, Professor Stockly said, was Gloria Steinem, who started to produce a magazine called *Ms.* where she raised consciousness and told women to fight for their rights; the magazine was needed by the feminist movement to change people’s ideas.

Moving on in our conversation, I asked Professor Stockly whether she believed that feminist movements need political affiliation to work; she answers that right now political affiliation is a concept very hard to explain; the last four years have seen the political arena polarize even more than it had ever done before, but she believed that in the past, women’s groups came together from various places on the political spectrum and worked for their common needs. However, as she had already been said before, women’s groups represented very different backgrounds, so it was not uncommon to see two movements completely against each other; for one, the right to abortion highlighted this difference. She explained that it is important to see feminism as plural, meaning that there are different ways people are going to enact their feminism; one could view feminism as advocating for women to be financially independent, such

as acting as the CEO of a huge company; while others could see feminism as reclaiming their sexuality and using their bodies to earn an income.

“At the end of the day,” Stockly said, “if you want to get something done you've got to play politics and you've got to find some agreement and come together and get enough people behind the issue and have a political affiliation and to be very clear about the intentions of the group” (K. Stockly, personal communication, February 19, 2021). She concluded by sadly stating that the US not even near being a progressive country, notwithstanding the advances in the legislative body. The country, she argues, is behind in every gender policy, from reproductive rights, family leave, and the wage gap. It is a continuous struggle that never sees an end; however, she believes that without the feminist movement of the 1970s, women's conditions would have been even worse. Therefore, the awareness they had raised will forever be impressed in people's minds.

Chapter 9: Policy Implications

Scholarly literature on the work of the feminist movement in the 1970s shows that it was successful for two reasons. First, the feminist movement revival came just after the civil rights movement, meaning that the feminists found the right moment to join a zeitgeist of social activism which had started just a few years prior. Second, they were successful because in the 1970s and 1980s politics commonly addressed social issues, meaning that political actors were open to give the feminist movement space in their agenda, allowing them to implement their policies.

Both of these concepts reemerged especially in the ethnographic interviews I conducted. The relationship between the movement, the historical moment, and political culture seemed to substantially influence the success of the women's groups in advancing their policies. Indeed, all of the people I talked to, and all of the literature I reviewed in order to summarize the central findings of this research, suggest that if in the past many of the policies were advanced and later implemented by the feminist movement with the support of political parties, while now the feminist movement's work is limited to smaller issues, local issues, where politics is not of any help. Therefore, one can say that contemporary women's groups still have an impact on society, but not on such a broad national stage as they used to claim.

Throughout my research I could not conclusively resolve my question about whether and how the feminist movement followed through with implementing their approved policies. During my ethnographic interviews, a common element was highlighted by almost every interview subject: once the policies were approved, little was done by anyone to ensure that those policies

were funded and implemented. There could be different reasons for this, and I believe this could be an interesting point to do further research on.

I believe there are different improvements that can be made to already existing gender policies. Starting with the first gender policy, regarding the right to abortion, I think there are different things the governments of Italy and the US can do to make this right irreversible. Italy could dismantle allowances for *obiettori di coscienza*,²³ according to which a doctor could refuse to perform an abortion for religious reasons, and make it a requirement for doctors to be willing to perform an abortion to get the license. The US, in turn, could use federal funds to support abortion clinics all around the country in order to make each individual state comply. Regarding parental leave, both Italy and the US could learn from Norway. Indeed, even though Italy has parental leave, very few men actually take advantage of it, whereas if Italy were to establish a fathers' quota,²⁴ men could be more inclined to use it because they know it has been proposed just for them. The US, on the other hand, could use a form of fathers' quota but paid; since parental leave in the US is not paid, both parents are reluctant to take it to avoid financial repercussions. Having a paid parental leave would definitely stimulate change on this issue. Finally, the research shows conclusively that the gender wage gap is a particularly common issue in all three of the countries I have analyzed, compared to parental leave and abortion rights, which are particularly problematic in Italy and the US but less so in Norway. I believe the gender wage gap is more of a sociocultural issue rather than a policy issue. States cannot force private companies to pay women and men the same; therefore, I believe that the path towards the annulment of wage gap is a cultural one, it starts by changing people's minds.

²³ *trans.* Conscientious objectors.

²⁴ The father's quota is a scheme in place in Norway, Sweden, and Iceland that allocates a portion of parental leave to fathers.

However, it is important to acknowledge the importance of this question in political science, for there is a mutual interdependence between sociocultural and political change. The relationship between political and cultural change can be considered somewhat of a "chicken and the egg" mystery. Sometimes, a culture is too stubborn and ingrained to reform on its own, so political change must pave the way for a culture to be compelled to change, such as in the case of the 1965 and 1966 American Civil Rights Acts, which ended Jim Crow laws in the south—or the desegregation of American schools in 1954. It's also worth noting that many of Germany's massacres during World War II were sanctioned by laws that successfully infiltrated the cultural "waters" and polluted the common public's minds against Jews; and then, after Germany lost the war, the racial rules were outlawed, and the community was forced to obey these new regulations and the culture itself gradually modified. Sometimes a legislative change is the important first step to changing culture. As Iris Varner said,

“Culture does not act in isolation. It is closely connected to law. Culture influences law, and law influences culture. For example, an egalitarian culture may establish laws that respect the rights of individuals and guarantee that these rights are not violated. By the same token, laws that enforce equal rights for men and women may foster a change in cultural values regarding the position of men and women in society. For example, several European countries now require a fixed percentage of women on corporate boards. The culture may change very slowly, but it does change.” (Varner, 2014)

To counterargue this instance, it is also true that civil rights issues should never be left to the democratic vote, since it would mean that the democratic majority, which is frequently the ruling class, would vote in their own interests rather than in the interest of a minority group. So, if the majority of democratic voters are white males, they would not vote in favor of women, and it is the imperative of a democratic government and political process to defend the rights of all people fairly. In that case, the political policy solution to the gender wage gap must be a matter

of political reform first, with a societal shift ideally following as people begin to acknowledge the government imperative of equal pay.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

When I first became interested in the relationship between feminist movement and politics, and when I started researching it, my hypothesis was that the feminist movement exerted a strong influence on gender policies, especially concerning abortion and reproductive rights, the gender wage gap, and family leave. It would be incorrect to say that I can still support that conclusion after all of my research. The more I read, the more I saw documentaries, and the more I talked to people who participated in the 1970s gender revolution in various countries, the more I grasped how simultaneously fragile and strong the feminist movement was. On the one hand, I observed a movement that was fragmented on the inside, unable to unite all women under common issues and demands; I saw a movement that had enemies on the inside; I saw a movement that gave up and started dealing with smaller issues with a very limited impact on society as a whole. However, on the other hand, I saw and observed a movement that fought a long and exhausting battle against a patriarchal society that for thousands of years had oppressed women and had gaslighted them into believing they could not do anything besides staying home and having children. I saw a movement that kept fighting to keep policies already approved and adopted because those were always questioned and put at risk by new legislations, new parties, and constantly threatened by what a patriarchal society judged to be right or wrong in that particular sociohistorical moment. Furthermore, my hypothesis that feminist movements could exert such influence on society because of their political affiliation was confirmed, especially by the interviews I conducted.

Overall, what my research showed was that Norway is indeed a particular case compared to Italy and the United States, in that Norway has a very progressive legislative body, with

enacted policies that protect women's rights with no comparison in the other two countries. Even though Italy has quite a progressive set of policies regarding abortion and parental leave, the gender wage gap remains a huge issue, placing the country last in the European ranking. The United States tell us a whole different story; if abortion rights exist, they are constantly threatened by conservative elements who keep limiting the power of said law. Parental leave and wage gap are two things that are not the priority in the American society, and very few policies are aimed at these two issues. Undoubtedly, as it comes from the research, feminist movements are the reason why conversations about abortion, parental leave, and wage gap began in the first place.

It is clear that if these feminist movements had never happened, women's conditions would have probably remained the same as they were two centuries ago. These women's groups were and still are the evidence that social movements can achieve change, even if they need the help of political actors; indeed, the reason why political agents are willing to help social movements is because they are highly visible and persistent; therefore, political agents wish to exploit their social power. Feminist movements—women coming together to fight as one—were the wakeup call society needed to acknowledge what was wrong and what needed to change. There is still a long path ahead of us before we can say there is gender equality in all three of the countries analyzed here.

When I started researching the feminist movement, I remember being inspired by the stories I was reading, feeling the flame of passion that always drove my writing in my academic career. I had never interviewed anyone, but I knew this was the right thing to do for my final political science project. I wanted to hear the stories I was reading from people who could tell me what it was like. Talking with six women from all around the world was an experience I will

never forget. It gave me the chance to compare other cultures with my own, some very far from what I am used to; it gave me the chance to experience history come alive.

What I learned through these interviews and through the research I have done is that women's rights cannot be taken for granted even when legislation exists that protects them. Notwithstanding the long path ahead of us, I believe that one must be forever grateful for all of those women fighting in the 1970s when no one believed them, when they had nothing to lose; the way they shaped gender policies in their own day was fundamental for the development of our contemporary gender policies. They laid the foundations for our future and that of the next generations—even though there is still much to fight for. As Betty Friedan wrote, “The feminists had destroyed the old image of woman, but they could not erase the hostility, the prejudice, the discrimination that still remained” (Friedan 2010).

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