Breaking the Lonely Mirror: An Analysis of Sociopolitical Mobilization within the Italian Feminist Movement from the 1970's to the Present

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Introduction: Italian Feminism Out of Fashion?

America’s National Public Radio published astonishing comments made by journalist Lilli Gruber regarding Italian women in 2008, in which she claimed, “feminism and solidarity among women [in Italy] are out of fashion,” (Poggioli 2008). The comment is unsurprising in some respects, and fits nicely with what I considered to be the strength (or lack thereof) of Italian feminism before I started this research project. My research began with the news of a sex scandal and a chance encounter with a shocking online documentary. In 2011, Italy’s prime minister at the time, Silvio Berlusconi, was accused of having sex with an underage prostitute. The news sparked my interest in gendered policy issues in the country, especially considering the stereotypes of Italy’s masculine culture that I had grown accustomed to. After exploring the issue further, I came across an online documentary produced in 2009 by social activist Lorella Zanardo entitled *Il Corpo Delle Donne*, or “Women’s Bodies”, which exposed the appalling treatment of women in the Italian media. Once I realized that Berlusconi controlled most of the television media at one point in his career (as the Prime Minister, he controlled the three state-operated “Rai” channels, and he privately owned a television and print empire), I could not ignore the feminist challenge that contemporary Italian women faced.

The more I learned about Italian feminism, the more I was fascinated by what I believed to be an under-represented body of literature in the western feminist discourse. The feminist theory was vast, and the history of uniquely Italian feminist protest was compelling. Italian feminism was different from the Anglo-American feminism I was familiar with because of its Marxist roots, emphasis on sexual difference, and distinctive forms of protest. I first traveled to Milan, Italy in the summer of 2012 to understand how Italian feminists were responding to issues they faced in their everyday lives, and was struck by the extensive feminist activity occurring weekly, even daily, in the city. For this reason, I decided to focus my research on the different mobilization techniques of
these feminists and craft a project that focused on the actual implementation of feminism rather than Italian feminist theory. Though the theoretical literature was vast, what had not been as represented in scholarly research was how Italian feminists used theory in practice. The two most recent “waves” of feminism, a term I define within the scope of the project in the first chapter, were the focus of my study. The research became a comparative look at how two generations of women were finding solutions to what they perceived to be gender inequities in their personal and political lives.

There are several resources that provide insight into the sociopolitical problems that Italian women have faced from the beginning of contemporary feminist activity in 1968. Franca Bimbi provides an in-depth look at how Italy’s family paradigm has influenced the political nature of the Italian welfare state, and describes the challenges that women face because of that paradigm (Bimbi 1999). Anna Fenton and Patrick Hanafin have explored the challenge to reproductive rights that has recently been raised in the country through analyses of the 2004 law on assisted reproduction and the influence of the Vatican on Italy’s gendered public policy (Fenton 2005, Hanafin 2007 and 2009). And finally, Yasmine Ergas has written about the relationship of feminists to institutionalized political party structures that illuminates challenges women faced even in the most “left-wing” of political movements (Ergas 1982).

Many pieces of Italian feminist theory are important to consider when writing about Italian feminism. A thorough compilation for the more casual reader can be found in Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp’s book Italian Feminist Thought: a Reader (1991). For the Italian adaptation of Luce Irigaray’s elaboration of sexual difference theory, the Milan Women’s Bookstore Collective’s Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice (1990) provides a clear and concise philosophical work to explore. A great example of a popular and distinctly Italian work of feminism is Carla Lonzi’s Sputiamo Su Hegel (“We Spit on Hegel”) (1974).
Further, feminist scholars have made great efforts to document certain aspects of Italian feminist activity. These efforts deal mostly with what I term “second wave” feminism. Lucia Birnbaum’s *Liberazione Della Donna: Feminism in Italy* (1986) discusses how feminist efforts addressed different cultural challenges in the 1970’s and early 1980’s. Sonja Plesset conducted a thorough ethnographic study of women’s organizations and their shelters for battered women, and writes about her experience in *Sheltering Women: Negotiating Gender and Violence in Northern Italy* (2006). However, these works only give one a glimpse of the techniques of mobilization used by the groups of feminists that they mention, and do not mention at all efforts that have been made in recent years. For this reason, I conducted several interviews over the course of 2012 and 2013 to help me understand mobilization from the perspective of Italian women themselves.

This project seeks to understand the primary mobilizing questions that have launched contemporary feminist movements in Italy, focusing particularly on the “second wave” feminism of the 1970’s and “third wave” feminism of the last fifteen years. There are two key questions I ask regarding my study of Italian feminist mobilization: what are the political and social issues that get women involved in consciousness raising, and how do various groups proceed to mobilize women in their ranks and women outside such groups in order to effect change in their society? The work is unique in that it links the feminism of the 1970’s to the feminism of today, and that it presents gaps in scholarly knowledge of feminist activity in recent years. The project also seeks to define as “feminist” the activity of women in Italy today, as feminist scholarship focused on Italy traditionally limits “traditional” feminism to the 1970’s.

The aim of this research is to illuminate the feminists in Italy that are fighting today, despite a frequently hostile government, a sexist media culture, and a thick glass ceiling. And further, I seek to link them with their predecessors, and find the common thread that pulls feminists of both recent generations together.
Methodology:

In the summer of 2012, and again in the spring of 2013, I interviewed Italian women of various professions in order to hear directly from various women what their feminist experiences were like. The methodology employed in both periods of research was the same, though I became more adept at ethnographic research methods in the latter part of my study. I was able to meet and interview a diverse array of women in different fields, often with the help and connections of Dr. Marina Calloni of the University of Milano-Bicocca.

I chose to employ a largely ethnographic research methodology because feminist ethnography seeks to “emphasize the significance of locating and analyzing particular standpoints in different contexts to explicate relations of domination embedded in communities and social institutions” (Naples, ch. 1). This fit with the scope of my abilities as a lone researcher and the vision I had for the project. I further believed that ethnography in general was best suited to the project because the study entailed “a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them,” and “investigation of a small number of cases… in detail.” Because so little research has been done about feminist mobilization in Italy, I needed to produce an exploratory work before I could test hypotheses about specific mobilization techniques.

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1 For interview questions, see Appendix I. All interviewee’s names have been changed, with the exception of Lea Melandri, to protect privacy. Melandri indicated on my release waiver that I could use her full name in the project.
2 I first became associated with Professor Calloni’s work in the fall of 2011 when I read one of her articles for the class “Women's Human Rights”, taught by Dr. Eileen Hunt Botting. Calloni had been awarded a Fulbright to come teach at the University of Notre Dame the previous academic year of 2010/2011. During this time, Professor Calloni and Professor Botting had developed a professional friendship. I expressed interest to Professor Botting in learning more about Professor Calloni’s specific brand of feminism and understanding more about the challenges facing Italian women, and subsequently decided I wanted to write about the subject for my senior thesis. Professor Botting helped me apply for my first travel research grant to Italy, awarded for the summer of 2012 by the Glynn Family Honors Program and the Nanovic Institute. I was put in touch with Professor Calloni by Professor Botting and she served as an “overseas” advisor while I was conducting my research in Milan.
Specifically within the ethnographic realm, my study employed interviews and participant observation. While in Italy, I went to several different events, including meetings of the artist collective Macao, presentations by the feminist-journalist group GiULiA, and documentary screenings by the Libreria Delle Donne, and have extensive field notes from the meetings and events I attended. While I occupied the role of “participant observer,” I was aware that the presence of an outsider could disturb group dynamics. Thankfully, many of the women’s groups I studied were used to the presence of outsiders and were very welcoming of my presence. Some of the meetings and events I attended were simply too large to inform every attendee/participant of my research and my intention to observe. However, in smaller meetings, such as the meetings I attended at the Free Women’s University in Milan or the Milan Women’s Bookstore collective, I always informed everyone present that I was writing a thesis on mobilization within Italian feminism. In smaller meetings, a group leader was informed of my intention to attend a meeting prior to my arrival, and she usually introduced me to everyone else. I do not refer to specific group names or women’s names in the work unless they were aware of my presence as a researcher and consented to have their names in print.

I pursued Brooke Ackerly’s “Single Case Research Method,” explained in her book Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Sciences (2010). The method entailed exploring a little-studied question in the confines of one country. Ackerly describes the “single case” methodology as one that “can be used to develop our theoretical and empirical knowledge about an understudied subject and generate new hypotheses that might be tested with other studies in the future” (Ackerly 129). My research, though attempting to enlarge theoretical and empirical knowledge, does not always generate hypotheses that might be tested, as it is an exploratory piece. However, there is hope that the material I have gathered can help later scholars develop hypotheses that they can test regarding the more understudied elements of feminism. My methodology closely followed Ackerly’s proposed
design, seeking to integrate participant observation, text, media, and data collection methods such as oral histories, interviews, and statistics from secondary sources (Ackerly 131).

I was highly aware of considerations Ackerly asserted one should keep in mind while conducting feminist research. For example, my study does not attempt to destabilize power relations existing within the community; because I am reporting feminist insights that are already widely known within the Italian feminist community, and disagreement among different feminist groups is already established and noted by group members, I am not exposing data that would surprise Italians themselves.

I developed questions for the interviewees based on my ethnographic intentions. Other types of data that became available to me included a wide range of ethnographic evidence: oral histories, for example, were a great way to understand what women had to say about their own lives. I interviewed women of varied backgrounds and ages; the inclusion criterion was that the participants must be born female. The women I interviewed were all natives of Italy and had all spent nearly their entire lives in the country. I have included the formal interviews of nine women of various backgrounds in the piece, but observed and talked to many more in order to attain a broader cultural perspective.

I recruited and screened subjects that were not contacts given to me by Professor Calloni in two different phases:

First, I conducted intense research regarding the feminist associations operating nationally in Italy and specifically in the Milan area. I then established contact with these organizations via email. These associations needed to fulfill requirements of professionalism, seriousness and legitimacy (what I deemed legitimate is to follow). I intended to secure the possibilities of both informal meetings with activist organizations and personal interviews with women participating in the movement.
Phase two was initiated upon my arrival in Italy. During this phase I established the reliability of my contacts through a preliminary screening based on an informal meeting. Once it was determined that the subjects and associations they represented were legitimate, I was able to expand my list of contacts through connecting with the networks of the associations I planned to work with. I defined a legitimate group as a group of feminists that met regularly, were active in their community and had a defined feminist mission. Without these three characteristics, it would be impossible to study feminist mobilization. I also wanted to screen out groups that met infrequently and were disorganized, because groups that were too highly informal would also tell me little about mobilization, the quality I desired to analyze.

Following this measure I was able to both select a finite number of subjects of varied culture and background who were willing to undergo a formal interview and I contextually observed and talked to many more women in order to acquire a broader social and cultural perspective.

The interviews were all conducted in Italian with the exception of one, and I personally have translated each interview. I am qualified to do this based on extensive personal study of Italian and the language immersion I experienced over my total six months of residence.\(^4\). Whenever I needed assistance with a difficult translation, I contacted the Italian student who served as my research aide while I worked in Italy. He is fully bilingual in English and Italian and met many of the interview subjects himself.\(^5\)

I have selected specific excerpts from interviews to include in the thesis. Though I only reference nine women in the work, I interviewed seventeen women in total. All interviews were

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4 I completed two Political Science courses and one Gender Studies course while I was studying at the University of Pavia, and did well in each course. I also was privately tutored in Italian while I was living there to improve my grammar, and finished Intermediate Italian I at the University of Notre Dame.

5 Ian Foss Hathaway, currently a first year Ph.D. student in Renaissance Studies at Yale University, was completing his “laurea magistrale”, similar to a Master’s Degree, in European History for the full six months that I was in Italy. We both attended the University of Pavia in the spring of 2013, and he accompanied me on many of my interviews in order to facilitate discussion and the translation of cultural references and colloquial phrases I had not been exposed to. For contact information, please ask the author.
either conducted in cafés around Milan, at the headquarters of a feminist organization, or in the interviewee’s home. Only one of the interviews, a meeting with three women from the feminist organization Se Non Ora Quando, was conducted in a group style. The interviews were face to face and all individuals knew they were being recorded. I recorded all of the interviews using a smartphone and immediately transferred the files to my computer to use as .mp3 files.

The seventeen women that I interviewed formally, though diverse in background, are of course not representative of all Italian feminists. This is a consideration that I keep in mind throughout the work.
Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework and Analysis

Understanding the Framework Used in this Study

The following study focuses on two distinct moments in Italian feminism throughout the last fifty years of activism. I adopt the well-known and widely used feminist “wave” framework to illuminate and differentiate between the two moments. However, because the wave framework was developed and popularized by Anglo-American feminists, I acknowledge that it may not always fit perfectly onto the Italian context; such concerns will be addressed later in the chapter.

I categorize the two types of feminism analyzed in the paper as “waves” for two reasons. First, Italian feminists used the terms “first wave,” “second wave,” and “third wave,” when speaking in English with regards to their own feminist history. Academic feminists in Italy that I spoke with were highly aware of American feminist theory and saw a link between American “waves” and their own feminist experience. Secondly, I desire to make a distinguishable demarcation between the two types of feminist activism that I studied in Italy, and the wave framework allows me to draw a relatively distinct, though imperfect, line between the different eras of activism that I analyze in this paper.

The “wave” framework is the standard understanding that many American feminists (and international feminists who have appropriated it) use to refer to distinct temporal and theoretical moments in western feminism. The idea of a “wave” itself is useful in conceptualizing feminist thought as a whole, because feminism is not reinvented with each new phase, but each wave is rather a new emergence or popularization of an already existing body of thought that has existed for several decades. However, a study of feminist waves quickly becomes complicated because different feminists invoke different aspects of feminism when referring to a specific wave.

For the purposes of this study about mobilization and mobilizing ethical questions, I am interested in only three parts of the “wave” classification and literature: 1) who the major actors
were in each wave, 2) what the goals of these actors and groups were, and 3) what methods and technology these actors and groups used to mobilize. This means that the sources I use and the information drawn from these sources arise from a specific reading of the “wave” theory. This is already an Italian reading of an Anglo-American concept, because activism and mobilization are not necessarily the primary focus of the American wave literature, though I find that it is a defining feature of Italian “waves”. For this reason, I have selected the parts of the American framework that are highly applicable to the Italian case and give a brief history of the elements that I use to classify the waves in this chapter. I desire to investigate whether all three of the characteristics I am choosing to study with regards to the wave framework change with the three waves of feminism, and it is for this purpose that I elaborate on the waves further in the text. In addition, all three of these elements will potentially be different in the Italian case and the American case. What is of fundamental importance, and what is highly consistent with the Italian case, is that what constitutes these three points of analysis changes between waves, thus creating a new “wave” and a new way to think about classifying feminist theory and practice.

This study focuses on second wave and third wave Italian feminism. In the context of this essay, “second wave” feminism is classified as the feminism that took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, sought female solidarity at the expense of the acceptance and celebration of diversity, saw a theoretical burst of what feminism could be and what the best way of accomplishing a feminist society was, and sought major legal reform (often met with some success). “Third wave” feminism refers to the contemporary generation of feminism beginning in the mid 1990s, is a feminism highly comfortable with diversity and technology, is critical of the limitations of the feminism that preceded it but recognizes its necessity, seeks to change the way the media portrays women, and seeks to understand the broad spectrum of the female experience.
Before jumping in to a historical background of the second and third wave’s activism and mobilization strategies, I provide a short explanation of is known as the “first wave”. Then I outline a short narrative to illuminate an understanding of the development of the most recent two waves, explain why I use the framework to describe Italian feminist moments, and then note general and Italian culturally specific limitations to this framework.

The first wave of feminism will not be a necessary reference point for the work conducted in this study; however, when feminists refer to the “first wave”, they are referring to the suffrage movement that took place in the western hemisphere in the first half of the twentieth century. First wave feminism grew out of the industrial revolution that took place in the West and the liberal politics that were developed during that time (Krolokke 1). To briefly apply the tripartite approach, the wave’s major actors “personified white, middle class femininity,” and were highly educated activists who often came directly from the abolitionist and temperance movements (Krolokke 3). Their major goals were to change understandings about appropriate female behavior, engage women in the labor force, and, as aforementioned, gain the franchise. This does not mean that socialist/Marxist feminism did not exist; however, it has not historically been as strongly associated with the first wave. First wave methods in the United States largely revolved around peaceful protest, marches, and picketing outside of the White House (Krolokke 5). In other words, first wave feminists often behaved in traditionally “male” ways to challenge the cult of domesticity. There was some variety of feminist thought in the first wave, but liberal feminism was the dominant theory.

An Elaboration of Second Wave Feminism

When referring to “second wave feminism”, Anglo-American feminists are largely referring to the more “radical” feminism that took place temporally concentrated in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s (Krolokke 7). The tripartite method of analysis is fairly straightforward when applied to the second wave. Just as feminists of the first wave, the main actors of the second wave became social
activists through other social movements. These included anti-Vietnam War protests, the lesbian and gay movements and the American civil rights and Black power movements (Krolokke 7). This diversified the actors present in the American second wave; women from the New Left, discouraged by their lack of recognition in the movement, became feminists during this time, “black feminists” such as Alice Walker, bell hooks, and Angela Davis reached a level of prominence that black feminists had not necessarily reached before, and a larger range of feminist theoreticians participated actively in the movement. Though more diversity may have been introduced, it was not necessarily the focus of the movement, as aforementioned, and the complexity of this issue will be addressed later in the text. The second wave’s goals were characterized by sexual politics; topics that interested second wave feminists ranged from the family, abortion, and sexuality to the sexual division of labor, rape, and domestic violence (Pilcher and Whelan 145). Specific second-wave techniques and methods included protests and marches, similarly to the first wave, performance (what they called “underground” or “guerilla theater”), consciousness-raising groups, extensive documentation of inequalities and a subsequent burst of applied academic study, and political organization (Krolokke 6, 11).

The “second wave” theoretical foundation is widely attributed to Simone DeBeauvoir’s The Second Sex and Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique. Feminists of this period were the first to apply the language of a “wave” to feminist movements, in order to signify a new burst of thought, or a burgeoning interest, in a greater body of philosophy and feminism that existed previously (Pilcher and Whelehan 144). The second wave in the United States is often broken down into three subgroups of feminist thought, though these types of feminism were present elsewhere. These categories are: liberal feminism, which believed that increased access to the public sphere would enhance women’s status and change gender roles; radical feminism, which focused on control over
women’s reproductive capacity and sexuality; and Marxist-socialist feminism, which saw capitalism and patriarchy as closely allied (Tong 26-27).

Second wave feminists, beyond being temporally concentrated in the 1970’s, struggled with what womanhood meant, and how the pure biological differences between men and women could and could not be used to justify what female traits should be complementary and what about men and women should be equal (Pilcher and Whelehan 144). Gray and Boddy argue that one defining feature of second wave feminist philosophy is that “women’s well-being was a priority, and gender binaries prevailed” (Gray and Boddy 369).

Inclusivity was further a goal of the second wave, but this goal’s realization ended up being a very specific type of inclusivity that later became problematic. Ideally, the second wave sought to begin including lesbian women, women of color, and working class women in a way that the suffrage movement had not (Pilcher and Whelan 146). In the United States, this occurred to some degree, but racial unity specifically was difficult to achieve. There was a clear break between white, middle class feminism, exemplified in the consciousness-raising groups of the National Organization of Women, and black feminism, represented by Alice Walker and bell hooks. These two subgroups of the American second wave were not necessarily in conflict at every level, though conflict occurred, but rather were different demographic groups of women that expressed a different set of challenges that they needed to overcome. A fact worthy of note is that, though feminism surfaced concurrently with Black, Chicana, and white feminist communities, the movements for the most part remained distinct during the second wave, as (for many white feminists) “issues of race and class were secondary concerns to gender” during this time (Staggenborg and Taylor 41, Gray and Boddy 369).

Rosemarie Tong posits that between the second and third wave there were so-called “transitional feminisms” that bridged the ideological gap between the second and third waves. She
calls these “multicultural and global feminisms”, which recognized the struggles of women in
developing countries, and “postmodern feminism”, which is the form of feminism that she believes
is highly theoretical and most commonly found in university gender-studies programs (Tong 31-32).
She argues that most feminists were put off by the highly theoretical nature of postmodern
feminism, with its emphasis on undoing binary oppositions and lack of emphasis on concrete action.
Tong argues that these are important transitional moments because elements of global feminism and
postmodernism feature prominently in third wave feminist discourse, but that they emerged from
existing feminist groups before the “third wave” was codified as such. Further, while many of the
“white” feminist organizations saw a drop off in activity after the second wave (into the 1980’s),
these other feminist organizations did not see a similar decline. This likely had an impact on the
politics and organization of the third wave.

The idea that we live in a “post-feminist” society originated as early as the beginning of the
1970’s, even when the second wave was just gaining momentum. Feminist activism therefore,
though classified in “waves” internally, may not always be recognized as periods of serious activism
externally, potentially complicating the clarity with which one can determine waves. Starting in the
70’s, “media commentators and other observers began to discuss the decline of the women’s
movement and the arrival of a ‘post feminist’ age” (Staggenborg and Taylor 37). The feminist
movement has struggled with the idea that we live in a “post feminist” society ever since, and
“postmodern feminism”, a feminism that linked the second and third waves, was criticized as a
“post feminist” school of thought that promoted theory over practice, and its supporters were not
popular among many second wave feminists (Tong 33). This was counter-balanced by feminism’s
ability to become institutionalized within structures that have continued to promote internal feminist
solidarity and external feminist action (Staggenborg and Taylor 43). Such possible institutions
include organizations that were founded in the late 1970’s and 1980’s such as the Institute for
Women’s Policy Research, founded in 1987 between the two waves, EMILY’S List, founded in 1985, and Women Against Pornography, founded in 1976. Before one can reach an understanding of the difference between the second and the third waves of feminism, one must consider that the dividing line between the second and third wave is contested. Cathryn Bailey distinguishes the waves “in terms of the decades during which the most significant public activity and political events occurred, the time when the most important second wave aims were achieved” (Bailey, 24). Thus, if we consider the public action of feminism during the 1970s, we can consider the second wave to represent this “wave” of action.

*Third Wave Feminism*

Though second wave feminists still exist, the kind of feminist public participation occurring is different in 2014, and it is thus possible to distinguish different waves through the different heights and means of feminist political participation. When applying the tripartite approach to the third wave, it becomes more challenging to classify each aspect under study due to the diversity that characterizes this moment in feminism. Broadly speaking, the major actors were young women, though not exclusively so; this is because the time lapse between the second and third wave was much shorter than the gap between the first and second wave. Racial and class diversity among actors is also more significant in the third wave than what existed in the previous two waves. This is partly due to the globalization that has occurred since the second wave and the introduction of “Third World” feminism, the democratization of feminist knowledge through technology, and the explicit celebration of difference that is part of the third wave. Third wave goals include celebrating diversity, reclaiming female sexuality, and undermining traditional sources of power (Krolokke 21, Bailey 26, Garrison 149).

Feminists who consider themselves of the “third wave” use tools that the second wave did not have access to; blogs, online newsmagazines, and Facebook pages figure prominently in
contemporary feminism, drawing a further distinction that might allow us to classify this
contemporary feminism as a new “wave”. This is a part of my three-part approach: methods of the
third wave have relied more heavily on technology than the generations of feminists before them,
producing blogs, social media, documentary films, “women only” cyberspace, and feminist “e-
zines”. Thus, the ways in which feminist consciousness is disseminated, in addition to temporal and
theoretical differences, can form a dividing line between the second and third waves. The
relationship that third wave feminists have with technology, as aforementioned in the section and
argued by Garrison, has also defined and shaped the third wave. Younger feminists themselves have
a different relationship to technology, and this allows them to mobilize in different ways than their
second-wave predecessors. This is not to say that feminists of the first and second waves did not use
technology, but merely that third wave feminists are using technology in a different way. As
Garrison argues,

appropriation of democratized technologies enables the proliferation of this [public
engagement] function and constructs different, counterpublic sites of resistance…the people
and machines that put together the text of a CD or tape, the performance event, the women
at the keyboard creating homepages and filling in information, the woman at Kinko’s or at
work putting together her/their zine(s) to distribute to girlfriends and other girls who write
for copies all represent moments of convergence between democratized technologies and a
networked, fractured form of Third Wave feminist differential consciousness (Garrison 157-
158).

While the second wave saw systems, structures, and fixed power relations as the issue, third
wave feminists moved towards “highlighting the complexities, contingencies, and challenges of
power and the diverse means and goals of agency,” (Krolokke 21). Third wave feminism has
incorporated a more tongue-in-cheek attitude towards feminist protest in general, evidenced by the
wave’s many different outgrowths: lipstick feminism, girlie feminism, riot grrl feminism, cybergrrl
feminism, and transfeminism, to name a few (Krolokke 15). One of the markers of this wave is
cultural re-appropriation of previously degrading words; “bitch,” and “slut” have been two of the
most prominent. Like each wave before it, third wave feminists drew upon other social movements that directly preceded them. “Queer Nation” and “Niggers With Attitude” were two groups who began re-appropriating language before feminists did en masse (Cideya, Rossi, & Hannah, 1992, cited by Krolokke, 16).

This group largely consists of young women who came to “feminist consciousness” after the Second Wave dropped off, which was usually because they were too young to be directly involved in the feminist movement of the 1970s or were born after it in the 1980s (Garrison 142). This means that they felt its influence as a historical movement rather than a current movement. The third wave can also be understood as a backlash of its own against the antifeminist backlash that occurred during the 1980s, or as a response to groups and ideological movements categorized as “fundamentalist, Moral Majority, neoconservative, Focus on the Family, and antifeminist” (Garrison 142). In fact, Ednie Garrison argues in her article “U.S. Feminism—GRRRL style!” that “the convergence of music, print, and information technologies, the historical specificities of backlash and post-civil rights movements, and feminist consciousness-raising multiplies the cultural locations where political activities can occur in the Third Wave” (Garrison 142).

Diversity has also become important in third wave feminism, as the United States has developed a more inclusive style of feminist participation. Feminists of the third wave are concerned with the racism evident within the second wave, and realize that racism still exists in feminism today (Bailey 26). Third wave feminists shy away from definitions about what “woman” is, compared to the second wave, in which “woman” was considered as a unified and identifiable group, (Garrison 149). Third wave feminists are highly motivated to accept diversity and change, which is a feature that distinguishes them from their predecessors in the second wave (Tong 33).

A unique element of the third wave has been how to understand female sexuality, self-expression, and pornography (Pilcher and Whelan 169). Feminists of the third wave have used sex as
protest; one feminist group, Axis of Eve, an anti-Bush political group in 2004, used “truth flashings,” in which lines of women displayed their underwear bearing slogans such as “expose bush”, “lick bush”, “weapon of mass destruction”, and “ballot box” (Staggenborg and Taylor 46). Feminists of the third wave can be loath to judge sex workers, and some even go so far as to see prostitution or porn acting as legitimate female enterprises (Tong 35). This contrasts starkly with many second wave feminist actors, who argued that any woman who felt liberated in these careers often possessed a false consciousness and that these types of economic activities were oppressive to the women involved.

Feminist actions of the third wave “are not always directed at or visible to the state because they target not only political but cultural institutions and mobilize around issues such as sexual harassment, violence, sexual abuse, body image, eating disorders, gender identity… and the popular media” (Staggenborg and Taylor 44). This is a connection to the ideas present in Naomi Wolf’s The Beauty Myth, reinforcing a critical review of media attention as relevant in feminist protest. These varied means of protest represent a way of distinguishing between the second and third wave, because the issues tackled, while political, require different types of action that call for different types of visibility.

Another point of noteworthy difference is that the third wave defines itself against the second wave, while second wave feminists defined themselves through the first wave. This reinforces the need for distinction between the second and third wave movements of feminism that define themselves differently but overlap temporally as movements (Bailey 21). In fact, it can be argued, as noted above, that third wave feminism originated directly in critiques of the second wave (Garrison 145). Further, what is interesting and notable about the third wave is that young women still create identities as feminists despite a cultural backlash against the second wave and the negative
connotation that the word “feminist” has accrued since the 1980’s (Garrison 149). Yet, the fact that they identify as a new “wave” of feminism is significant to consider with regards to this point.

There are several challenges associated with third-wave feminism. Just as the second wave was criticized for its lack of diversity, the third wave has attempted to be so all-inclusive that the task can be daunting and it has been said that the movement risks losing its focus. Further, attempting to conduct feminism on a global scale is highly challenging despite increased communication (Tong 35).

A Critical Assessment of the Framework

The “wave” framework has its limitations, and is not a framework that allows for automatic and uncontested categorizations. Some feminists interviewed for the study were highly active during the second wave, but now belong to third wave feminist groups. Thus, I will use second and third wave classifications to organize institutions and periods of mobilization, and will not use the term to categorize individual women. Because the women I interviewed did not always self-identify one way or another, the framework is not sufficient to categorize individuals without their own admission. The framework allows for broad generalizations, but does not respect the highly nuanced qualities of difference between individual feminists across time. Because, for the most part, they all did self identify as feminists of some kind, I will use second and third wave terminology to describe the institutions they belonged to and the ideals those institutions promoted.

The reason it is important to distinguish waves is because the goals of feminism, especially in Italy, have changed as the movement has progressed. Though the temporal line that divides the two waves can be difficult to determine, there are ideological differences present, as outlined above. Yet, some scholars assert, “one reason for assumptions about the death of feminism is that scholars think about the movement in terms of its ‘waves’ or cycles of protest” (Staggenborg and Taylor 37). What is implied here is that, when the “wave” dies out, it is easy for critics to label feminism as no longer
relevant in society. Just because feminists are not visible in public protests does not mean that they do not exist, but it is possible for those not involved in the movement to believe the movement has ended its reign of influence.

Another problem with the wave framework is that it undermines the legitimacy of women who engage in feminist activity but are not part of institutionalized feminist groups. This can be seen particularly in the second wave, as will be explained further in the next section. Many working class women and “women of color around the world” have continued sustained advocacy regardless of “waves” of political action undertaken by privileged, middle class, white feminists (Staggenborg and Taylor 38). It is additionally useful to note that traditional measures of feminist activity, such as the number and timing of public protests such as marches, demonstrations, rallies, public meetings, etc, have not been and are not currently the only forms of feminist protest. Therefore, it should be noted that categorizing feminism in “first,” “second,” and “third” waves obscures the fact that feminism that has not used traditional forms of protest has continued to exist between “waves” and can thus be hidden within the waves themselves (Staggenborg and Taylor 46). It is also worthy of note that Tong’s three “feminisms” of the second wave do not do justice to all second wave feminists (let alone the plurality of feminists in the third wave). Feminism is a movement that is diverse and impossible to encapsulate into a particular philosophy or brand. It is a movement that, at its core, seeks to understand why gender inequality exists and how to best combat it, but that message and even its most successful comprehension and realization are far from concrete.

*Applying the Framework to the Italian Case*

Almost all Italian feminists I spoke with understood what I meant when I invoked the terms “second wave feminism” and “third wave feminism.” In fact, sometimes the language was appropriated before I mentioned it; it was the way they naturally spoke of their own feminisms when speaking in English. Italian feminists also often used the term “fiume carsico”, which translates as
“underground river,” when talking about feminist waves. The “fiume carsico” was meant to illustrate feminism as a river that was seen aboveground for a period of time, would continue flowing out of sight, and then re-emerge later in time.

The Italian second wave was marked by a much stronger presence of Marxist, or Socialist, feminism than the American case. I recorded in my notes from an informal meeting something striking that an Italian woman said: “individualism is a bad paradigm for feminism”. Another feminist I spoke with informally also thought this point was noteworthy; she stated that it is important to note that in Italy the influence of liberal feminism has been less significant. A lot of feminists in Italy have historically been communist; in the 1970’s, Italian feminism promoted a complete change of sexual relations and understanding, and some feminists associated themselves directly with the communist party of Italy. The socialist strand of feminism sees revolution as the only answer to change women’s status in a male dominated world riddled with corrupt institutions (Pilcher and Whelehan, 50). The way second-wave Italian feminists understood the best kind of reform was different from the American case, and the way they saw individualism was different from the American case.

Elements of the American second wave can still be identified in the Italian case, and will be further explored later in the project. In Milan, the Libreria Delle Donne, or Women’s Bookstore, met frequently to discuss what gender meant and how they understood femininity in their own form of “consciousness-raising”. The philosophical outgrowth of their work became the famous book Sexual Difference, which was a distinctly more “European” production of feminist theory. Liberal feminism, a dominant strand of feminism in the United States, downplays the difference between the sexes to a large extent, while Italian feminism often saw sexual difference as liberating and something to be celebrated. One question commonly raised by the women of the Milanese Women’s Bookstore was the extent to which they should involve men in the deliberations of these sexual politics; though
they were debating women’s issues, they needed broad based support from male politicians to pass new legislation regarding divorce and abortion rights. A primary part of the theory of sexual difference was the understanding that all relationships involve conflict, and that developed into part of the mobilizing language of the Italian second wave.

Italy enjoyed relative racial homogeneity during the period of second wave, though in a meeting I had with the women of the Libreria delle Donne di Milano, they professed that it was a goal of theirs to honor diversity. A lot of the second wave diversity I noticed in my fieldwork was often a diversity of opinion, so rather than seeing different demographics coming together to collaborate, Italian feminism of the second wave confronted ideological diversity and sought to engage these diverse and independent groups in respectful discussion. Many of these Milanese women were very adamant that one type of feminist “prescription” was not what was going to achieve the greatest feminist philosophy, which should rather be compiled from several different sources.

Conclusion

The wave framework has been highly useful to me, but I did not always support the divisions it encouraged between feminists of different generations in the way I noticed it played out in the Italian context. In some ways, it is useful for the feminism of today to break from old, “stereotypical” definitions of feminism, and recreate the identity of what feminism is and can be. However, there is something disheartening about feminists qualifying that they aren’t the “old feminists” or diminishing the validity of feminist projects that they don’t align with their own. Despite this division, it is undeniable that what it is to be a feminist does change over time, along with the goals and challenges that emerge as new feminist goals are met, and new challenges arise, and that is one strength of the framework that will help break down the analysis to come regarding feminist mobilization.
The next two chapters seek to use these two different, broad classifications of the Italian feminist movement to illuminate the way feminism in Italy has changed over time and project its future directions. I use a quite inclusive definition of “feminism” in order to downplay the divisions that labels cause within the movement, and to highlight the innovative ways that feminists are seeking to address and remedy the problems they see in their society. The waves are also important to separate because there is a dialogue that continues to occur between them, and the third wave builds off of the second wave in significant ways. Exactly how each wave understood its own significance and challenges shall be explored in the pages to come.
Chapter 2: Methods of Mobilization in Second Wave Feminism

Introduction

The second wave of Italian feminism was a powerful movement that, like many second wave movements in the west, fundamentally challenged how women saw their role in society and what they could achieve as independent actors. In Italy, this exploration of womanhood and women’s rights primarily took place in consciousness-raising groups, political parties and institutions, and labor unions. The movement was highly concerned with understanding women’s relationships to each other and to their society. Against the backdrop of an economic boom and collapse, and in a postwar setting controlled by religious and centrist political groups, many women were ready for a change. After workers and students revolted and sought progress, women took the chance to mobilize effectively for nearly a decade. The movement’s limitations will be explored, but its successes were undeniable and it forever changed women’s activism in the country.

The second wave feminist movement emerged from the burst of social activism that occurred 1968, a year still highly relevant in the Italian popular consciousness. The movements of 1968 were primarily concerned with rights for workers and the concerns of university students, but many Italians were asking fundamental questions about the way an ideal Italian society should be run. Yet, women realized a problematic exclusion from activist leadership, and the second wave of feminism grew out of this discontent.

Italian women started wondering what their femininity meant, what its value was, and what their greater role was in society as women. Many of these questions were addressed in small groups of women that met to discuss everything from everyday problems and frustrations to the philosophical quandaries associated with womanhood. These groups were called autocoscienza groups, translated to “self awareness” or “self knowledge”, and were adapted from the American practice of consciousness raising. This was a big step forward for many women in their feminist journey, as they
learned that problems they faced were problems that women from many different backgrounds also faced.

Working women excluded from the worker’s uprisings sought to use the strengthened union structure to their advantage. Feminists such as Lea Melandri, the founder of Milan’s “Free University for Women”, used government-sponsored 150 hour courses to implement their own form of consciousness raising practice. Activists within the unions also sought to make employment conditions better for women and included women that may have been excluded from the *autocoscienza* groups.

Feminists also mobilized with specific political goals, and won several legislative battles due to mass protest and effective political pressure strategies. The most noteworthy examples of feminist legislative victories were the passage of Italy’s divorce law for reasons other than infidelity and the passage of Italy’s abortion law. Feminists successfully mobilized against Vatican pressure in both instances, and gathered enough support to defeat Vatican-sponsored referendums for repeal for both laws.

Finally, women began challenging the cultural authority of powerful institutions in Italy, notably the Catholic Church. They refused to accept the gender-binary complementary nature of Vatican teaching on gender, and rebelled in creative ways against it. These identifying features of second wave Italian feminism fundamentally changed Italian culture, and created an environment in which women’s concerns could be made political and addressed through collective protest.

*The Student Movements of 1968*

After the Italian “economic miracle” of 1958-1962, the economy fell into a crisis that created a social and political context for the famous student and worker uprisings of 1968. Many Italians still refer to “sessant’otto” (sixty eight) colloquially as an Italian golden age of political revolution. Women participated in both movements, yet noticed a troubling trend: they were systematically
being denied an equal voice to their male counterparts. The labor unions, which were centers of mobilization for the labor uprisings, retained traditional male power structures that often denied female agency. There was likewise a serious democratic imbalance between the genders on the student side of the movement at the university level. The results of many of the movements’ efforts, such as “direct democracy” practices implemented at the university and union level, often led to male mediation and dominance (Passerini 236).

The gender discrimination within the movements of 1968 fostered self-awareness amongst female activists that they faced structural and organizational bias in political leadership and cultural understanding. Women increasingly rejected this and wanted to define themselves as subjects with relation to other women (Passerini 236). Maria Della Costa reinforces this in her article, “Domestic Labor and the Women’s Movement In Italy Since the 1970s”:

The great workers’ and students’ struggles of the late 1960s laid the ground from which the feminist movement emerged in the 1970s. Protagonists from the beginning, and centers of aggregation with other women in the formation of feminist groups, were precisely those women who had experienced their own lack of representation as political subjects in the student and workers’ movement and in their activism in the extra-parliamentary groups (Dalla Costa 24).

At the same time, the American women’s movement was displaying “pressure group” politics, or sectional politics, which is a type of political mobilization that can still be seen in the United States today (Sassoon 102). Italian feminist groups, who sought to change their political structure through groups in existence and the political system in place, began adapting the American “pressure politics” strategy to fit their own cultural context. Feminists began meeting in groups to discuss their experiences and systematic discrimination, and these groups became known as “autocoscienza”.

*Autocoscienza*

Though ideologically and philosophically distinct from the American second wave, the Italian second wave adopted a mobilization method pioneered by the National Organization for
Women in the United States; the practice was known as “consciousness-raising”, or in Italian, “autocoscienza” mobilization. “Autocoscienza” [AC] directly translates to “self awareness,” or “self knowledge,” and involved meetings of small groups of women and discussions of different topics related to gender imbalances and problems that women faced in the workplace and in family life.

Each AC group was different and unique in both the American and the Italian case; there was no central structure in Italy that dictated what groups should talk about or how they should be run. The decentralized model was one of the defining elements of consciousness-raising, and thus the way Americans conceived of the practice is highly useful in understanding how Italian women responded to the practice and later expanded upon it. As Virginia Sapiro writes in her essay, “When Are Interests Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women”, “[Consciousness-raising] efforts are meant to increase awareness among women that what they might perceive as personal and isolated problems (such as underdeveloped skills, poor pay, or even feelings of ‘middle-aged depression’) are widely shared problems that are due in large part to social, economic, and political factors” (Sapiro 705). AC groups were radically democratic and influenced by the direct democracy of the two social movements that preceded them; they focused on the problem of poor female representation in the public sphere and gave members identities as women, not just as impersonal subjects. This recognition and celebration of difference from men is what separated the consciousness-raising movement from previous female movements in Italy and makes its presence distinctly second wave (Passerini 237). The practice allowed women who had no previous political training to speak and theorize about sociopolitical issues and the policies that influenced them.

In order for mobilization to take place, women had to be able to articulate what political and social discrimination they faced, and this meant revolutionizing the way women related to each other and creating a link between the personal and political. Women needed to similarly formulate formal demands to make of the system based on this collective “group consciousness” (Sapiro 704). This
included democratizing the private sphere and revolutionizing interactions between men and women in family life (Passerini 238). The Italian case, though initially based on the American practice, soon became a uniquely Italian method of mobilization. Luisa Passerini in her article “The Interpretations of Democracy in the Italian Women’s Movement of the 1970s and 1980s” argues that consciousness-raising feminism was the most widespread Italian female mobilization method of the 1970s, and that the practice changed the way many women related to one another and the way they saw themselves as political subjects (Passerini 236). This aligns nicely within the wave framework, as this is a specific theoretical outgrowth and mobilization technique that is unique to this period of feminism, and matches what was occurring in the American second wave.

At the time of AC mobilization in the late 1960s, women had a very limited public voice. As indicated above, even if women were in political organizations and involved in political protests, they were taken less seriously than their male counterparts. Completely female situations allowed them to be able to speak; this initial exchange of words can therefore be considered one of the most obvious, and most effective, means of mobilization. AC groups provided the platform that women needed to mobilize in this way. Women indeed responded with vigor, as the movement grew to encompass 100 groups in 60 cities by the height of its popularity in 1974 (Passerini 237).

I interviewed a member of a prominent AC group in Turin, which was considered one of the most “modern” cities in Italy at the height of AC’s popularity. Turin was one of the centers of political negotiation due to its economic primacy in the Italian industrial economy. This makes a study of AC in Turin interesting because of the political legitimacy offered to groups and the weight of political mobilization in the city. The woman I interviewed indicated that the aforementioned type of consciousness-raising was highly applicable in her case (Innocenti). In her group, she noted that there was no central organization by a larger feminist group, and that people often spoke about whatever was on their mind. Her testimony corroborates the point asserted by Passerini earlier in
the chapter that each group was different and unique; there was no central structure in Italy that dictated what groups should talk about or how they should be run. My interviewee mentioned that in her “autocoscienza” group, women argued, talked, and were interested in understanding the history of feminism in Italy. Her group decided to open a library to preserve for future generations all of the knowledge that the members had gained from “autocoscienza”. They considered the preservation of their thoughts and works to be an important political act because the articulation of female experience is often left out of “official history”.

_Feminist Mobilization within the Labor Unions_

Italy in the postwar period came to be governed by the Christian Democratic party (DC), which was a center-right party that favored liberal economic policies. Seeking in some ways to appease the American influence in the Cold War and remain favored in the postwar Marshall plan, neo-liberal economic policies were adopted that favored industrialization (Sassoon 15). Any institution affiliated with the Socialist or Communist Parties was suppressed; this was evident in overt government bias against the communist-affiliated CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana Lavoratori) national labor union. Unions did not gain substantial political influence until the 1960s as a part of the “opening to the left” that occurred in the Italian government. The “opening to the left” occurred when the ruling party, the DC, formed an alliance with what remained of the socialist party in Italy. This historical context is highly relevant because labor unions began to gain power around the same time as the genesis of the Italian feminist movement. This allowed labor unions to be utilized as a platform for female organization and subsequent mobilization. Women involved in unions were most often not of the middle and upper classes and therefore could not afford to stop working during a time that squeezed women out of work and culturally relied on the “male breadwinner” model of familial structure.
Mobilization within the labor unions was highly politicized; labor unions in Italy were generally tied to specific political parties, which meant that labor union initiatives came second to the political motives of respective parties (Frogett 36). The three main labor unions in Italy are and were the CGIL, the CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati dei Lavoratori), and the UIL (Unione Italiana Lavoratori). The CGIL has roots in the communist movement, the UIL is broadly understood as socialist, and the CISL represents Catholic activist thought and the former Christian Democratic party.

As indicated above, labor unions are particularly relevant to feminist mobilization during the 1970s because they provided an access point to feminism for women that were left out of the consciousness-raising movement. For the first time, women were demanding to be treated as women, understood to have different needs and therefore requiring different services from the labor unions. However, this was problematic to the unions in many ways, because women were fundamentally challenging “assumptions about the limits of trade union politics” (Frogett 39).

“150 hour” courses were one way that women changed what labor unions could provide them with regards to mobilization and feminist consciousness. 150 hour courses, so named because employers had to grant 150 hours per year of paid leave for cultural and learning activities, were the arena in which labor union feminism could develop (Melchiori). Teachers in this informal structure began teaching classes only for women, and these often became “consciousness-raising” sessions of their own, and created a bridge between lower class women and a culturally remote feminist movement (Frogett 38). This formed a new subculture within the union structure, one in which women were able to begin thinking about their collective experience in a new way. This created a new engagement with themes of emancipation and “liberation” in economic and even private life (Frogett 38). 150 hour courses were actually designated by the government as official “public school.” Classes and workers who graduated could receive certificates, legitimizing their role as
classes and the pedagogic legitimacy of instructors. They were not private seminars that had little practical value to the workers.

A mobilizing ethical question that was often discussed in a “consciousness-raising” format was the defense of the working class wage and the protection of the common laborer (Dalla Costa 25). This was a rather non-revolutionary stance, and one that initially didn’t seek to amend many of the issues that plagued Italian family life and relationships within it, differentiating it from the philosophically more “radical” consciousness-raising discussions. However, even within the mobilization that took place, women developed through labor union organization a new way of communicating problems of discrimination, or “a level of experience previously regarded as irrelevant to trade unionism: emotions, sexuality, maternity, personal relationships and the bearing these have on work,” (Frogett 36).

We should not be surprised that the labor union feminists’ approach to feminist theory and practice had a different bent than the majority of consciousness-raising groups because of their emphasis on employment and equality in the workplace. However, their presence was strong and influential; due largely to the strong presence unions had in the political arena, the Italian women’s movement sought to involve labor unions more significantly than other European feminisms (Frogett 35).

In an interview with me, the head of the “Centro Donna”, or “women’s center” of the CGIL, lamented that in Italy there is a mentality problem regarding how Italians see the real limits of labor union politics. She indicated that the potential that labor unions have to effect social change is greater than Italians believe (Anello). She seemed to indicate, as does Lynn Frogett in her article “Feminism and the Italian Trade Unions,” that the answer to women’s problems in the workplace lies in changing how one views the mediation role played by a labor union, and that the union feminists of the 1970s failed to get any real mentality change off the ground. The head of the Centro
Donna went so far as to say that organized labor is for men, and that it still retains a highly gendered power structure. She argued that the laws regarding female labor equality are already in existence in Italy, and so the problems that women continue to face in the Italian workforce and labor structure are due to the fact that the union mentality is still largely masculine.

Still, women within the labor unions were working to make employment better for women. The woman I interviewed at the Equal Opportunity office at CISL emphasized that part of what necessitated female employment was that women needed to be able to take control of money (Mora). Men had controlled money and had thus used it to consolidate power within the family, and this was a problem she thought had to be addressed at the time. She mentioned that women did less “qualified work”; she said that traditional “woman’s work” was less valued by society and was problematic because working similar hours to men did not guarantee the same income. She frankly acknowledged that when she first entered the workforce at 14 she knew she would be paid less than men even if she did the same work. Yet, on a personal level, she did not feel discriminated against. She took issue with the attitudes of her female coworkers; she claimed that women wanted less, and asked for less than the men that worked alongside them. According to her, “this happened also in life.”

Maria Dalla Costa provides additional evidence that this was the case, and acknowledges that Italian feminism battled with the idea of “work/rejection of work” (Dalla Costa 24). Women did not know how to negotiate what was an appropriate level of work both inside and outside the home; the member of CISL articulated that women did not know what they deserved or what they should ask for, and Dalla Costa points out that the burden of work placed upon the mother was difficult to negotiate in terms of policy protection and within the family structure itself. Indeed, Frogett remarks that “[the change achieved] falls far short of [feminists’] initial expectations, because significant as the growth in consciousness has been, it has not given rise to any fundamental changes
in the methods and content of the main stream of trade union politics” (Frogett 40). Another problematic aspect of union mobilization is that men were still largely favored with regards to most job possibilities, and consequently the unemployment rate in Italy has always been higher among women, which obviously excludes them from protection by a labor union (Dalla Costa 32).

**A Confrontation of Union and Autocoscienza Challenges**

In the summer of 2012, I interviewed the noteworthy feminist Lea Melandri, the founder of the “Libera Università delle Donne” (LUD), or “Free University for Women”. She herself came from the 150 hour course tradition referred to in previous sections as a teacher and experienced the feminist consciousness that formed there firsthand (Melandri). Lea realized that the school offered was for “operai”, or workers, but not for housewives, and she saw a problem that needed to be addressed. Lea specifically highlighted the personal relevance of education in her life; education allowed her to escape a failing marriage and leave behind the tenant farming life of her parents. Melandri articulated an interesting contradiction in Italian family life; especially among the poor, women often contributed manual labor in the fields to keep the family afloat (Melandri). Yet, despite this, and despite the work they contributed to their families, they didn’t have power within the household. She grew up just assuming that was how life was, and didn’t charge the men in her early life with malicious intention. She said that women had power in that they were indispensable, so they were not completely without agency in the family. Though the culture may have given primary power to the father of the family, it was understood that the unit couldn’t function without the mother.

Dalla Costa further reinforces Ms. Melandri’s story. The family unit served as its own type of “factory”, but the problem was that, despite the irreplaceable nature of women’s work, women gained no material benefit from the hours spent taking care of the family (Dalla Costa 25). They
provided welfare support, “with an unlimited working day, no wage, no vacation, no pension and no social assistance” (Dalla Costa 25).

The response that Lea received from the women she taught was compelling enough for her to continue teaching courses just for women and later open up the Free University for Women in 1987, serving women within the labor unions and the housewives who didn’t benefit from union practices. The “university” was a direct outgrowth of her work with housewives, as she saw an opportunity to merge the intellectual side of feminism with the practical problems put forth by women who didn’t have the education to be able to articulate their own lives as a part of the feminist consciousness (Melandri).

Lea also highlighted that she wanted to move “women’s studies” away from a traditional university structure, which was too highly enmeshed with the patriarchal institutions in place, and create her own structure of learning. She specified that she believes it is good to keep feminism out of universities, because it keeps feminism democratic. She indicated that this is necessary for feminism to last as a representative movement (Melandri).

This organization is interesting because it is based around the idea of “scuola senza fine,” or “school without end”. What became the LUD clearly saw continued education for women as a method of feminist mobilization and a way for women to access feminism in a more organized setting than traditional “autocoscienza”. The Free University for Women was a direct outgrowth of the success of the mobilization that took place in the labor unions. The founders of the group were feminists and university professors who had been experimenting with the most appropriate way to continue what was happening in the classes for the “operai”, or union workers (Melchiori). As this indicates, the goal of the Free University was to provide a meeting between regular women and

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6 It is interesting to note Lea’s strong opinion regarding the role that feminism could play in university education, as this is clearly not the case in the United States, where most major universities have institutionalized “gender studies”, or “women’s studies”, programs.
intellectual women, and she made clear that both sides learned from each other in the process. Both groups sought to redefine cultural paradigms and understand philosophical issues about femininity, and the result of the practice was rather synergistic.

A founding member, Paola Melchiori, refers to the organization’s end goal as a “feminist politics of knowledge”. The organization lists in its statute that their aims are:

a) Promoting the understanding of social problems through research, travel, documents, meetings, and discussion
b) Forming groups of members and non-members to work on cultural, environmental, historical, political, economical, and religious problems
c) Planning and managing school, courses, or cultural and professional members and non-members.
d) Editing magazines, audiovisual and cultural materials.
e) Promoting shows, parties, exhibitions, artistic and cultural events

(Melchiori, 1986)

Melchiori additionally indicated that the mission of the LUD was a direct outgrowth of the “autocoscienza” movement, but it is possible to argue that the pedagogical nature of the institution does not allow the Free University for Women to be regarded as traditional consciousness-raising in nature. Rather, it is an attempt to reconcile the problems of consciousness-raising feminism with a continued emphasis on awareness, engagement, and mediation between different types of women.

Their mission is stated as follows:

Culture is not a way to attain emancipation, but it is a precise answer to intellectual, existential and vital needs. Culture is a tool for research concerning life, a “quality” of life, not a “quantity” to be possessed.

The aim of our research is not only to reinstate female presence in various disciplines, but to investigate the meaning of the fantastic and real man/woman, masculine/feminine, relationship, which lies at the origin and shapes any kind of knowledge, finding out which transformations a female subject brings into them. (Melchiori, 1986)

Mobilizing Within Political Party Structures

It is not uncommon for women’s movements to struggle with institutionalized political actors, but political parties must still be thought of as “mobilizing” in some ways because they fight
for political change and women are often involved in their structure. The role women played in the antifascist movement in Italy, and later the Italian communist party, gave them political salience that allowed them to demand new rights and engage in politics in new ways. To briefly contextualize the political party landscape in Italy prior to the second wave of feminist activity, Italy in the postwar period came to be ruled by the Christian Democratic party (DC), which was part of a greater party movement in Europe that sought to combine religious influence and values with politics. Traditional family values were promoted by the political organization aligned with the Christian Democrats, Azione Cattolica, or Catholic Action (AC). The Italian government remained center-right until 1963, which is when the center-left portions of the DC united in a coalition government with the PSI, or Socialist party (Sassoon 48).

In that same year, there were women’s associations created, representing each side of the political spectrum (Ergas 257). These were the Centro di Iniziativa Femmile (CIF) on the side of the Christian Democrats, and the Unione Donne Italiane (UDI) on the side of the Communist party (PCI) and the Socialist party (PSI). However, cold war politics in the 1950s placed pressure on the Communist party to take a more conciliatory stance towards the government that was in power, which restricted the ability of the party to organize a radical feminist contingent (Ergas 257). Though the PCI and the New Left did not completely accept radical feminism, “women [within the movement and mobilized in 1968] 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 acquired an ideology, which could motivate and justify their rebellion in the New Left” (Ergas 261).

The Christian Democratic party, while in power, did little to advance the status of women in terms of public policy, and the PCI continually diminished the autonomy of the UDI through a continuous effort to use the organization as a political mouthpiece to advance the party’s policy (Ergas 257). Thus, a supposedly independent woman’s organization was largely co-opted during a
time when the PCI needed to regain political legitimacy and was not necessarily run by the women it was supposed to represent. This is clearly problematic from a feminist standpoint, and explains some of the radicalism seen and the consequent refusal to work with existing political institutions in the feminist movement of the 1970s.

The Communist party started advocating awareness of women’s issues in new ways; it is arguable that the Communist parties of Italy did promote policy that supported the development of the social status of women (Sapiro 708). Women within these parties began coordinating highly political protests; in 1974, the “Movimento di Liberazione della Donna”, or the “movement for the liberation of women,” which was aligned with the Radical Party, coordinated the transportation of women who needed abortions to an illegal abortion clinic in Florence and to legal clinics in Britain (Ergas 262).

Feminists engaged with political systems through routine publications that were subsidized by major political parties, such as the magazine effe (which is the Italian pronunciation of the letter “f”), supported by the PSI. Women further organized conventions that were explicitly political in nature. One such convention, in 1971, known as the festa della mamma per una maternità libera (mother’s festival for free motherhood) attempted to bring to the national political stage the idea of motherhood as a choice, rather than an obligatory part of a woman’s role (Birnbaum 90). Though the UDI experienced various levels of autonomy during the second wave of Italian feminism, they provided a publicly political face for women’s policy battles, and were significant players in the wave of new legislation passed during the 1970’s (see below).

There were several achievements with regards to policy due to active female engagement in political parties, and the efforts of parties to represent their female constituency. Lucia Birnbaum, in
her book “Liberazione della donna; Feminism in Italy” cites the following examples of policy successes during the second wave:

1) The repeal of the punitive law against unfaithful wives (1968)
2) The new law allowing divorce for reasons other than infidelity (1970)
3) New nursery school legislation (1971)
4) The repeal of a law prohibiting the dissemination of information regarding birth control (1971)
5) New protective legislation for working mothers (1971)
6) Referendum campaign to repeal a punitive abortion law (1971)
7) Protective legislation for women in the cottage industry (1973)
8) Defeat of referendum to repeal divorce law (1974)
9) Therapeutic abortions affirmed as constitutional (1975)
10) Law for family health clinics with provision for birth control counseling (1975)
11) Maternity and infant legislation (1975)
12) Law clarifying equal family rights (1975)
13) House approval of bill on abortion (1977)
14) Law clarifying equal pay and equal treatment of male and female workers (1977)
15) Law legalizing abortion (1978)
16) Referendum campaign for law against sexual violence (1979)
17) 300,000 referendum signatures for law against sexual violence presented to parliament (1980)
18) Defeat of referendum to repeal the abortion law (1981)

Although in some cases similar legal reforms were made across western countries during this period, points 1 and 2 were specific reformations to laws that were directly handed down from the Fascist code of law created by Mussolini. Points 8 and 18 are further unique to the Italian case because they were referenda put forth by the Vatican to repeal laws that the Church saw as immoral; the defeat of the referendum challenges to abortion and divorce are specifically Italian points of feminist mobilization. Further successes of Italian party mobilization can be seen in pure numbers; women were routinely mobilized in demonstrations and campaigns for referenda. In the 1975 demonstration for “equal family rights”, fifty thousand women participated (Birnbaum 91). The campaign for legal abortion turned out twenty thousand women, despite Catholic pressure against the measure. When the DC and Italy’s fascist party, the MSI, tried to claim that abortion was a crime, five thousand women protested at a rally in 1976. In Rome a year later, fifty thousand women

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7 Can be found on pages 89 and 90
campaigned for the abortion law and the same number mobilized to fight against the referendum for the law’s repeal (Birnbaum 91). Rallies that turned out an unestimated number of women further included fights against sexual violence. The mobilization was effective at the polls as well; in 1983 the DC saw its plurality fall to the lowest it had seen during its period of political leadership. Only thirty-three percent of Italians voted to keep the party in power, and women openly credited themselves with this electoral phenomenon (Birnbaum 95).

By contrast, the PCI, representative in many ways of the “new left” and supportive of women’s issues, saw their percentage of the electorate climb from nineteen percent in 1946 to thirty-four percent in 1976, and retained a similar level of support for many years after (Birnbaum 99). Franca Bimbi, in her article “The Family Paradigm in the Italian Welfare State,” claims that feminism in Italy “thus saw the fusing of two types of cultural approach [to affect change]: the first, a liberal-radical approach, saw the liberation of women in terms of self-determination with regard to sexuality and the family; the second approach was based on the sort of opposition to the system which was typical of Marxist thought” (Bimbi 77). This type of mobilization was, as Bimbi claims, uniquely Italian in its nature. It is important to note that this is an important case in which Italy deviates from the standard wave framework, because radical opposition to systems in place were combined with actions that used existing systems to affect this change. The rise of the Italian communist party as electorally relevant in a democracy, and women’s role within it, made the real threat of a communist takeover through liberal institutions distinctive to Italy.

*Mobilizing to Oppose Vatican Pressure*

The Catholic Church has played a political role in Italy ever since Italy’s origin as a state. The Catholic Church took definitive and articulated stances regarding the appropriate relationship between the state and the church (Bimbi 74). The Church also saw the family as its moral domain, a domain that it could regulate in a “moral, legal, and social” sense. The Catholic Church sought, in
opposition to divorce and abortion laws, to subordinate individual rights to the rights of the family (Bimbi 78). Further, the Catholic tradition was commonly held to impose housework on women as a part of their natural social role (Dalla Costa 24).

The Vatican and its Catholic mobilization thus played a role in the delay of a “no-fault” divorce law in Italy. It is possible to argue that the “minimum legal separation of five years” (seven, if the other party objected) was a direct result of Church resistance to divorce (Birnbaum 103). The Church was also a large provider of welfare, and thus was able to decide who were appropriate recipients for their aid (Bimbi 76). The state actually funded the Church, assuming it was the most “natural” distributor of aid to the poor. This aid was further compromised by the stigmatization of those who needed help but were not the traditional users of welfare, namely, children and the elderly (Bimbi 76).

In Carla Lonzi’s famous theoretical feminist work “We spit on Hegel,” she claims that the Italian Church “identified women with sex” (Lonzi 1974, as quoted by Birnbaum, 84). Lonzi also articulated problems with the “complementarian” stance of the Church, which she claimed justified male dominance, and criticized the Catholic feminine values of virginity, chastity, and fidelity. Many Italian feminists saw orthodox Catholic doctrine promoting a particular theology of patriarchy and sexism (Birnbaum 111). For this reason, many feminist thinkers left the “official” church and began calling themselves “credenti”, or “believers”. This rejection should not be seen as an outright rejection of Christianity, though for some it was. It was rather a rejection of the institutional church structure and its dogmatic set of beliefs (Birnbaum 111).

Women responded to Catholic Iconography by creating cultural institutions like the Teatro Maddalena, or the “Magdalene theater”, that played upon the perceived minimization of Mary Magdalene in Catholic theology (Birnbaum 106). Women in Italy emerged as feminist theologians
that challenged traditional church doctrine. Lidia Menapace famously wrote the introduction to the widely read feminist theological work *The Other Half of the Church* (Birnbaum 119).

**Conclusion**

Altogether, feminism in *autocoscienza* groups, labor union feminism, and feminist political activism for women’s rights and against church pressure set in motion practices and understandings that third wave feminism would later engage. Feminism in *autocoscienza* helped produce a great deal of theoretical feminist work that has helped preserve the insights of those groups and has allowed later feminists to build upon the insights of their forbears. Feminism in labor unions and in 150 hour courses democratized a lot of feminist insight, and made it accessible to women that weren’t operating in the more philosophical groups of traditional *autocoscienza*, and helped women become aware of their rights as female workers. Feminist political pressure in the second wave was highly influential and widely remembered by almost everyone I talked to in Italy; it served as a reminder that with enough passion and the right issues, feminists could make change happen. Feminists of later generations often remarked that they were grateful for the legislative battles won by the second wave group of feminists.

Italian feminism of the 1970s was very critical of existing power structures and sought a revolution in the way that women and men interacted with each other in all levels of society. Feminists claimed that there needed to be a fundamental change in the sexual division of labor and the relationship between women’s private lives and public reality. Feminists’ successful mobilization during the 1970s was one of the most visible revolutions that the country had seen, and created an awareness that did not previously exist in the country. Both feminists of the second wave and the third wave agree on an important point. In the words of the woman at CISL, feminists of the 70s “gave words to what didn’t have a word” (Mora). This set the stage for feminism to evolve and grow as Italian culture continued to develop. The third wave, in many ways, continues to build upon what
the second wave accomplished, and several women of the younger generations attested to this often. Though they had different goals and even different understandings of feminism, many realize the importance of mobilization through autocoscienza, labor unions, and political parties and understand that they were necessary for the third wave to exist today. However, third wave feminists in Italy acknowledge that the movement left unfinished business, and addressing problems of care, representation, and reproductive rights are ongoing battles that women are still fighting today.
Chapter 3: Third Wave Feminism and the Tangles Left to Unravel

Introduction

When I first went to Italy, I expected third wave feminists to identify with feminism in the same way that many third wave feminists in the United States did; in my experience, the label of “feminist” wasn’t reserved to a particular group in a particular time of United States feminist history. Feminist, to me, meant anyone who was willing to challenge gender inequality between men and women in society.

The issue ended up being more complicated than I anticipated. I discovered that some second wave feminists seemed content to declare the end of feminism and the entry into a “post-feminist” era. The Milan Women’s Bookstore Collective, or the Libreria delle Donne di Milano, published in their periodical in 1996 that “Patriarchy is over, it has lost women’s trust and it is over… and now? What will happen to the world and to ourselves, now that the patriarchal symbolic order no more regulates, and will ever less regulate, women’s lives and their relationship with men?” (Bono and Giardini 1027). Sonja Plesset calls the late 90’s an era of “post-feminism” in her ethnography of northern Italian women, drawing a clear demarcation between “feminists” as social activists and activism that has carried over from a feminist era. She also seems to conclude that feminism ended after the wave of reform that occurred in the late 1970s.

Many young women I connected with and sought to interview were highly active in politics and engaged with ending gender imbalances in politics; I believed I would find feminists in this group. Yet, when I asked one of these women if she was a feminist, a politician of the Milanese “Consiglio Comunale,” (city council), she answered “in the traditional sense, clearly no” (De Luca). When I asked a law professor turned politician, who was interested in defending questions of abortion rights and general equality, if she identified as a feminist, she answered “as an Italian feminist? No.” When I followed up, asking what she meant by this, she replied, “they followed the
line of “we are different” implying that the Italian feminist theory of sexual difference generally generated a sense of separatism among feminists of the 70s (Mancini). In fact, she went so far as to call the activists following the '68 revolutions the “real feminists”.

Thus presents one of the more difficult issues to reconcile with regards to general perceptions about 1970’s Italian feminism—some criticize the movement for being separatist, although it is not entirely true that feminists of that era did not ever engage in institutions populated mostly by men. It is important to note, that, as mentioned in the previous chapter, feminism occurred in political parties and labor unions. However, the criticism is not wholly untrue, either, because this type of feminism occurred on a relatively small scale in light of the entire political party and labor union structure. In other words, though feminism existed within societal structures in place, the leadership of both types of organizations and the majority of union and party members were still male. The biggest problem, according to some third wave feminists, is that women didn’t actually achieve a lasting voice in government, evidenced by their continuously lagging formal presence in the Italian legislature.

Yet, not all Italian scholars and Italian women seem to agree with these assertions. Those who quoted the Women’s Bookstore, Bono and Giardini, open their work with the imploration, “Rather than marking a true turning point, the end of the millennium can become a pretext to repropose a founding gesture for feminist thought,” implying that they consider the feminist movement ongoing (Bono and Giardini 1027). Additionally, not all women who were young denied the title of feminist. Tiziana, an employee of an Assessore in Milan (an assessore is part of the “Giunta” or executive council of the city), felt perfectly comfortable saying that she was a feminist, because she had a political commitment characterized by a fight for equal rights and equal opportunity (Esposito). The women I met from Se Non Ora Quandò, an organization that one of its
founding members labeled as “third wave feminist” in nature, all identified as feminists as well, though many second wave feminists refused to call them feminists in the same sense that they were.

This ambivalence about who is a feminist is evident in many scholarly pieces regarding feminism—it is not always clear if by “feminist” an author is referring to all people who identify as feminists or rather to only those that many consider “traditionally feminist.” In this chapter, I identify major challenges facing women that seem to require a feminist response, and examine how some women have responded to them. Though there is not a great deal of formal data on third wave Italian feminism, I have some anecdotal evidence from interviews that I will supply as possible feminist solutions.

A collection of essays regarding contemporary Italian feminist theory was published during the spring of 2013, when I was living in Milan, entitled Femministe a Parole: Grovigli da Districare. This translates to “Feminists in Words: Tangles to unravel”. This chapter seeks to do just that; I identify the “tangles” complicating the lives of Italian women and how some women have responded to them, in the hopes that a greater picture of what third wave Italian feminism is will be uncovered in future research.

Although second wave feminists undoubtedly made big policy gains that continue to be important, there are many battles that have yet to be fought by Italian feminists today. Three particular issues were raised by the women I interviewed as part of this research: the burden of care work, reproductive rights, and political representation. While these three issues are by no means exhaustive of what women struggle with in Italy today, they are also issues that scholarship has pointed to on many occasions as ongoing feminist challenges.

*The Continued Problem of Care Work*

Women commonly shoulder most of the household labor in western countries; it is so culturally pervasive that even Sheryl Sandberg included a section regarding the necessity to share
household duties in her pop-feminism 2013 bestseller *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. Thus, it is not surprising that the Italian women I interviewed commonly brought up the burden of care work. Yet there does appear to be something special about the Italian case. Scholarship on the issue repeatedly notes the unique “familism” in Italian culture, (D’Apice and Fadda (2003), Saraceno and Naldini (2003), and Pagani and Marenzi (2001)). Further, anthropologist Sonja Plesset (2006) notes that Italians tend to live near their families, which would increase women’s access to both help from parents and also the necessity to care for them in their old age. An econometric study published by Laura Pagani and Anna Marenzi in 2008 reinforces this trend and predicts that the care burden will unfavorably increase in the near future.

Italy’s welfare system relies heavily on free unpaid domestic labor, and the allocation of welfare spending reflects this, as will later be explored. Though this is not a solely Italian issue, it is relevant to understand the care burden placed upon women in contemporary Italy because it is a feminist issue in the country regardless of its uniqueness. Further, it is a problem that does not appear to have been resolved by the second wave of Italian feminism, and thus third wave feminists are engaging with the subject today.

The domestic labor required of women poses a problem for a number of reasons, including the related pressure Italian women feel to leave the workforce because of this extra labor. According to Carmela D’Apice and Sebastiano Fadda’s study, “The Italian Welfare System in the European Context”, women continue to make up for the welfare system’s deficiency:

In Italy the family has historically played a significant role as a system of informal social protection carried out primarily by women. Women have shouldered responsibility for child care, care for the elderly, the disabled and the chronically ill, and families have provided support to their young adults seeking their first entree into the job market and to family members facing unemployment or divorce. This role of the family as social support system and the reliance on women as homemakers and caregivers has compensated for many shortcomings and structural inadequacies of Italy’s social support system. Even today labor market participation of women remains low in Italy and is almost 15 percent below the European average (325).
Because Italian women continue to provide free welfare services to their families, there is a lack of formal support from the state for women engaged in these roles. However, these “free” welfare services provided by women come at a cost, such as the low rate of female employment in Italy, noted by D’Apice and Fadda. The gendered employment gap is staggering; 2013 data from the OECD Better Life Index showed that 67% of Italian men are engaged in paid work compared to 47% of women (“Italy”). The EU average in 2012 showed male employment to be at 69.6% for men and 58.5% for women (“Employment Statistics”). This finding is highly troubling and further separates Italy from the rest of the west if care-work is a cause of this disparity. Further, Italy likely skews the percentage of employed women in the EU overall, indicating that employment for EU women when Italy is removed from the statistics is likely slightly higher than 58.5%.

Several other contemporary scholars agree with this assessment and argue that reliance upon the family is utilized to make up for the deficits in welfare payments in Italy (D’Apice and Fadda 325). D’Apice and Fadda published their article in 2003, which is the same year that a study conducted by Saraceno and Naldini, referenced in Lombardo and Sangiuliano’s work, made similar conclusions. Saraceno and Naldini’s findings reinforced the idea that “familism” is a very Italian social context that leads to minimal state intervention in areas of life traditionally provided for by the family (Lombardo and Sangiuliano 446). Lombardo and Sangiuliano’s work, published in 2009, found the data still relevant enough to publish six years later, and drew conclusions regarding the influence of “familism” in Italian policy; they cite a study conducted by Eurostat, published in 2005 to back up this claim. The study indicated that Italy allocates 4% of state spending to “family policies”, while the European average is 8% (Lombardo and Sangiuliano 446).

The reliance upon family care does not appear to be shifting in Italian women’s favor. Laura Pagani and Anna Marenzi, in their article “The Labor Market Participation of Sandwich Generation Italian Women,” remark that
Italy represents a very interesting country to study [with regards to the effect family ties have on labor participation], as original family ties remain generally very strong throughout life. This circumstance results in a cross-generational pact; parents help their adult children even when they have formed an independent family and, in exchange, get assistance and care if needed (428).

Pagani and Marenzi’s study, conducted in 2008, reinforces field work Plesset conducted in the late 1990’s and published in 2006, proving this trend to be a reliable indicator of Italian culture and life as of quite recently. Pagani and Marenzi note that these Italian family ties can help or hinder women; if elderly parents are not self sufficient and need constant care, there is pressure on women to leave the workforce, but if they are healthy they often help with household duties and childcare, diminishing the care burden placed upon women (and indeed they note it is usually the woman performing such care) (Pagani and Marenzi 428). However, demographic changes taking place in Italy do not favor the current “sandwich generation,” or the generation of adult women taking care of children and elderly parents. Pagani and Marenzi note that, “According to forecasts, in Italy by the year 2020 the dependency index of older people, calculated as the ratio between the population over 64 and the working age population (ages 15–64), will be above 30% (Visco 2000)” (Pagani and Marenzi 441). It is implied in their argument that the “dependency index” is growing in an unfavorable way with respect towards younger generations, indicating that the care burden placed on women will likely increase as the population ages.

In my interviews with various women in the Italian city government and the Lombardy regional government, the restrictions women face due to care work were corroborated and even provided insight into the problem of female political representation in Italy. When I asked Viola, a member of the advisory council of the city of Milan, why she thought Italy had never had a female prime minister, she answered that the care burdens placed on Italian women can prevent them from being able to devote a lot of time to work—she believed that it would be highly difficult for a

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8 Names have been changed.
woman to be a successful politician while having a family (De Luca). Describing Italy’s problem of female unemployment in general, she said that culturally, when it is necessary for one person to stay at home, it is usually the woman. She said that a mother of three would likely try to stay home, but distinguished between the north and the south (it is common for Italians to differentiate the cultural landscape of Italy this way,) implying it was worse for women in the south (De Luca). This point is highly relevant, because if women are not actively engaged in the labor force, they cannot take advantage of state welfare programs that protect those in the workforce.

As Susan Okin’s work pointed out twenty-five years ago⁹, female unemployment (or underemployment) can cause several problems for women in contemporary western societies. Firstly, there can be psychological problems caused by the “solitary and isolating” work of raising a family and managing a home full time (Abbey 27). The aforementioned care burden includes raising a family and managing a home, two activities that diminish a woman’s ability to be fully engaged in the paid labor force. Income disparity within a marital relationship can give the male partner prestige and clout within the relationship due to primary breadwinner status (Abbey 29). For example, women may rely financially on a male partner, and feel dependent upon him if her income is not sufficient to support herself and her children. This may not only create a power imbalance in the relationship but can limit the woman’s options if she wants to end that relationship. This is particularly concerning if there is domestic violence involved. Further, time spent away from work due to care-burden restraints has consequences for those seeking to reenter the workforce. When women have been out of the workforce for a significant period of time, they may be forced to reenter with out employer references or recent experience (Abbey 29). When the effects of time away from the workforce are added together, women’s ability to accrue savings of their own are diminished, increasing female dependence on government services for support in the event of a

⁹ As summarized by Ruth Abbey in her 2011 book The Return of Feminist Liberalism
break from a breadwinning partner. If this is directly related to the amount of time women devote to care, it is obvious why a more equitable solution must be reached. There are absolutely fulfilling aspects of care work and child-rearing, and it is quite possible that some women might make an informed choice to stay at home and carry out these duties full time. However, there is a societal problem that needs to be addressed when women are not able to make this choice freely, and have to carry out most of the care work and household labor to the detriment of their career.

Though women shoulder many welfare responsibilities, there are still Italian welfare payments to the most needy members of society, and these modest provisions definitely help women and families. D’Apice and Fadda note that there are protections geared towards families going through economic hardship (allowances for rent, school fees, and child support) and single or very poor mothers, with a maternity allowance of 258 euro a month for five months (D’Apice and Fadda 331). However, when the article was written in 2003, the authors asserted that the government was increasingly seeking to rely on a familial system of support. This reliance on the family is not culturally specific to the Italian case, but it is not unimportant when one considers the challenges continuing to plague Italian women.

D’Apice and Fadda argue that a historic strength of the Italian welfare state is Italy’s commitment to generous pensions. Pensions have been and remain the main system of social support in the country; Italy spends more on pensions than the largest welfare state, Sweden, though Sweden spends more overall on social protection (Italy allocates 25.3% of GDP to social protection compared to Sweden’s 32.9%) (D’Apice and Fadda 324, 332). Italian pensions include the “Trattamento di Fine Rapporto,” which is a generous system of severance pay, and additionally forms the most basic source of social support the Italian government offers, especially in cases of disability or unemployment in the long term (D’Apice and Fadda 322).
An understanding of this disparity in between need and state spending arises when the political goals of second wave feminists are analyzed. Lombardo and Sangiuliano indicate that the emphasis that Italian feminists have historically put on sexual difference created a problematic political environment. One consequence of the prevailing “difference” approach over an “egalitarian” or liberal approach has been “the construction of ‘differentiated’ female pensioners whose main role as caregivers is supported and maintained in spite of the consequences for women’s lives and the definition of their employment status” (Lombardo and Sangiuliano 449). Women do not receive any social benefits from care work, as they are not paid for housework and the work is not recognized by the state.

The social toll of the welfare disparity can be more clearly seen in Sonja Plesset’s data, compiled in her book _Sheltering Women; Negotiating Gender and Violence in Northern Italy_ (2006). The work reflects more significantly on the _lavoro di cura_ (care work) of Italian women and its problematic prominence in the lives of second wave feminists. Many subjects in her book were self-identified feminists who had been involved in communist feminist activity in the 1970’s, and thus fit the criteria I argue constitute a feminist of the second wave. The women of her study often remarked upon the amount of labor they would have to do in their house and the amount of time that occupied for them. Several women I interviewed reflected further upon the impossibility of doing such care work effectively while employed in the public sector; thus, by comparing Plesset’s data to mine, one can arrive at a more complete picture of how the imbalance of gender expectations in home-life can affect the way women see themselves as autonomous actors. I spoke with three women who explicitly referred to this problem, though anecdotally the range of women who discussed the difficulty of working and raising a family was broad. All three women are involved in the local government; two work for the Comune di Milano (in the city government) and the other works for the Regione Lombardia (the Lombardy, or regional government).
Plesset presents data published by ISTAT, the Italian statistical agency, and measures the disproportionate amount of time that women spent taking care of “activities for the family, housework, work outside the home, personal needs, and free time”. According to an analysis published by Rosella Palomba in 1997, married women spent on average four hours and thirty-six minutes on housework, while married men spent a mere thirty-six minutes (Plesset 120). Marta Domíngues-Folgueras, in her article “Is Cohabitation More Egalitarian? The Division of Household Labor in Five European Countries” (2013) proves this highly gendered division of labor to remain largely unchanged in Italy. Analyzing statistics published by the Multinational Time Use Surveys in 2010, she discovered that Italians spend about 419.8 minutes per day on housework (the most amount of time spent by any country in the sample), but men do only about 20% of the tasks (the lowest percentage of any country in the sample) (Domíngues-Folgueras 1637). “Housework” is defined in four categories, “cleaning,” “cooking”, “shopping,” and “occasional”. This data reinforces the claim that women’s care work within the home prevents them from being able to pursue careers with the same vigor as their male counterparts.

In one of my interviews, Tiziana, an employee of a Milanese politician, mentioned how unbalanced her life was towards work (Esposito). She said that her husband would like to have children, but that she has delayed it because she understands the impact it will have on her career, and in Italy the services for new mothers and fathers are so minimal. Further, she felt that children would limit her career possibilities. Luisa, on the other hand, is a mother and an active politician in the regional government. She has three children and the only time she mentioned her direct experience was an incident she encountered in her career as a professor. At twenty-nine, after writing three books, and seeking to obtain achieve legitimacy as a scholar, she was told that she should maybe wait to become a professor and dedicate her time before then to her children
(Mancini). These experiences all point not only a difficult balancing act that many of these women felt they needed to master, but also gendered societal pressure to be the caretaker of their homes.

The women that I interviewed who struggled with these challenges are not unique. Plesset recounts the stories of women who had previously been involved in the *Unione donne Italiane* (The Union of Italian Women, which was a branch of the communist movement) and the communist party. Feminists often told her that the changes they sought to implement in society did not end up playing out at home. Plesset writes, “Iliaria, like her friend Giovanna, fought for the rights of women throughout the 1970s only to admit thirty years later, with a disillusioned sigh, that she has been unable to incorporate the changes she sought for society into her own marital relationship” (Plesset 65). Another woman she calls “Alessia” describes how this was a potential limit of consciousness raising feminism when she tells Plesset, “The error that we [feminists] made was to personally find our own paths, our own solutions to having a career and a family. We never found any general solutions, cultural solutions that could be used by later generations” (Plesset 66). These women reinforce the narrative that, despite the major legal gains made by feminists in the 1970s, there were cultural and social problems that, in contemporary Italy, remain to be solved.

*Policy Problems facing Italian Women Today – Reproductive Rights*

Despite the partial decriminalization of abortion that feminists played a large role in achieving in the 1970’s, also referred to as the 1978 Abortion Act, the law continues to cause problems for women, and its implementation has been quite conservative (Hanafin 2009, 232). Silvio Berlusconi’s coalition governments often employed anti-abortion rhetoric to appeal to a conservative voter base, as well as to Catholic groups in Italy (Hanafin 2009, 232). The 1978 Abortion Act, commonly referenced by my interview subjects as one of the great achievements of 1970’s feminists, in some cases blatantly attempts to dissuade women seeking abortions. As Patrick
Hanafin explains in his article “Refusing disembodiment: Abortion and the paradox of reproductive rights in contemporary Italy,”

The Act restricts the right to terminate pregnancy to the first ninety days in cases where pregnancy would pose a serious danger to the physical or mental health of the woman or where there is malformation of the foetus. After seven days from the date of request, the woman obtains a certificate, which allows her to terminate her pregnancy at either a public hospital or clinic in the Italian National Health Care system or alternatively in a private clinic or hospital which has been authorized to carry out pregnancy terminations by regional health authorities. (233)

Hanafin argues that “dissuasion is an explicit goal” of the act because the medical professional has to confirm that women are in a position in which their physical or mental health would be in danger; if women’s burdens are “social, economic, or family problems,” then the doctor has the “duty” to help the patient remove these obstacles rather than terminate the pregnancy (Hanafin 233). There is further a “conscientious objection” clause, in which a doctor may refuse abortion treatment on “ethical or religious grounds” (Hanafin 2009, 234). According to Italy’s Ministry of Health, 70% of gynecologists are conscientious objectors (though statistically, many of the conscientious objectors are concentrated in southern regions) (Hanafin 2009, 234). This leads to overburdened medical professionals who are willing to perform abortions, and a high rate of illegal abortions, numbering at least 15,000 per year (Hanafin 2009, 235).

Hanafin places a large amount of blame for this hostile environment on the Catholic church and lobbies connected with the Vatican, and based on the results of Italy’s 2004 assisted reproduction law, he may be right. In 2004, the Italian government passed a law regarding assisted reproduction that codified the Catholic Church’s position on the personhood of the fetus and largely limited women’s reproductive rights (Hanafin 2006, 329). In the law, access to assisted reproduction technologies are limited to “stable heterosexual couples of a fertile age who may use only their own, and not donor, gametes. The woman is under an obligation to have all created embryos, healthy or diseased, implanted” (Fenton 73). In Rachel Anne Fenton’s article, “Catholic
Doctrine Versus Women’s Rights: The New Italian Law on Assisted Reproduction”, she asserts that the law was highly influenced by Catholic moral teaching and “is an example of how moral and ethical issues may be determined by peculiarly national cultural perspectives, identity, and heritage,” (Fenton 75). The law’s specifics are as follows: women must be deemed clinically infertile in order to access the assisted reproductive technologies available, and only when other “methods of combating infertility or sterility” have not worked, the law designates that any child born must be the genetic child of both parents; finally, the law does not provide access to assisted reproduction technology for homosexual couples or single women (Fenton 83, 84, 88).

Though the Catholic Church mobilized very effectively to get this law passed, feminists did not mobilize against its passage. Fenton argues, “Italian feminism revealed itself reticent, if not silent, and certainly not organized” (Fenton 77). This inability to mobilize likely reflects divisions within the Italian feminist movement, as no clear position was identified within the movement. Without an identified and definitive stance, mobilization is significantly more difficult. Ida Dominijanni and Luisa Muraro, two prominent feminists in Italy today, have argued that the lack of feminist response is due to the difficulty in confronting both the hatred felt towards traditional motherhood and the desire for motherhood that many women still feel (Fenton 81). Fenton, in any case, believes that a period of reflection is necessary before one can understand why feminists have not mobilized in any coherent way to defend reproductive rights in Italy today (Fenton 81). As will be explored, the explanation may lie in the complication of how feminists desire to mobilize and protect reproductive rights, and how they define those rights.

This policy battle is significant because, as aforementioned, the law that feminists helped pass in 1978 was the most frequently cited success of Italian feminism. The difficulty that this law has had, the challenges it faces in the Italian legislature, and new restrictive reproductive legislation
reinforces the idea that a major weakness of the second wave platform is that its mobilization was temporary and did not achieve a lasting political voice.

The absence of a feminist voice with regards to the assisted reproduction bill may reflect that feminists understand the right not to have a child to be different in a significant way from the right to have a child. The issue of assisted reproduction represents more than a lack of mobilization regarding reproductive rights; it represents a complication to the standard understanding of what reproductive rights truly are. In the second wave, there was greater consensus regarding these rights. Because abortion was the primary battleground, feminists took a pro-choice stance, and the issue was more simply resolved. In the decades following the primary battle over abortion, what is considered a “reproductive right” has changed, and this same feminist consensus has not emerged regarding new technological fertility procedures. The lack of feminist mobilization is likely caused by the new landscape of reproductive issues that are more complicated than the prior pro-life/pro-choice debate. There is, after all, a difference in forcing a woman to have a child she does not want, and assisting a woman to have a child that she is biologically unable to conceive on her own. The former seems coercive, while the latter can be seen as more of a luxury that individuals should pay for through their own means.

*The Problem, and Solution, of Representation*

Though the political situation in Italy might seem dire, women are entering the national government in greater numbers. This aspect of traditional feminism seems to be changing as more feminists and women distance themselves from the autonomous groups of the second wave. In the 2008 elections in Italy, the number of female representatives reached 20.3 percent of the total parliament (Campus 249). The number had increased slightly by 2012, with women representing 21.6% of the parliament (Sedghi 2012). Though these numbers are encouraging, as of 2008 there had never been female party leaders of major parties, there has never been a female prime minister,
and women had never been appointed to “key cabinet positions” like Foreign Affairs, Economics, Labor, etc. (Campus 250).

In the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) National Report in 2010, there were some troubling news media trends that may reinforce notions that politics are “a man’s world”. The report noted that the bulk of national news focuses on political issues in Italy, which often means that the main subjects of news media are men (GMMP 7). The report also published that women mainly report on “soft news”, like celebrity, arts, media, and sports news (GMMP 8). Men also more often report “hard news” like political and economic news, with 54% of cases reported by men and 46% reported by women (GMMP 11). In “Political Discussion, Views of Political Expertise, and Women’s Representation in Italy,” Campus advances the hypothesis that “even if Italian women have gradually caught up with men in the field of education, professional career and income, gender role expectations still contribute to maintain low levels of active political participation and representation” (Campus 251).

Historically, women in Italy have been underrepresented in the government, averaging a representation of about 11% in the Parliament in the decade preceding 2007 (Lombardo and Sangiuliano 446, 447). Achieving a greater presence of women in government is positive for many reasons, and I believe that it can change many aspects of women’s lives for the better. As Soraya Chemaly wrote in an article for the Huffington Post, “Despite their low numbers, female elected officials make a difference in the issues they prioritize, the bills they sponsor and cosponsor, the output they generate, and the extent to which they mobilize their constituents” (Chemaly 2012). Many women I spoke with that were involved in third wave feminist movements or were active in politics in general, had ideas about how to engage women in politics and how to change this problem of female representation. Yet, because so many battles that women are facing are so
directly related to legislative problems, I would assert that there is good reason to believe that engaging more women in government is a viable solution to many feminist problems.

As stated earlier, representation in government was often brought up in my interviews of third-wave feminists. I interviewed three women who were a part of the movement *Se Non Ora, Quando?* (SNOQ) which translates to “if not now, when?” in the summer of 2012 in Rome, where the movement is headquartered. The movement, according to one of the interviewees, was born on January 20, 2011, when a group of women heard that there was going to be a movement of protest against Berlusconi (SNOQ). The original protesters turned the protest into a formal movement and around forty branches of the new organization sprung up “spontaneously” (SNOQ). According to the SNOQ member in Rome, they were protesting Berlusconi’s sex scandals and standing up for women’s dignity; they have come to stand for a greater level of representation of women in politics, an equal democracy, ending harassment for women at work, and understanding different answers to the question “what else is there to being a woman?” (SNOQ). The women claimed that on February 13 of that same year, 1.5 million women (and some men) took to the streets to protest the treatment women were getting in the media, politically, and socially (SNOQ). These numbers are cited by the organization as well, which would represent a huge feat of contemporary Italian feminist mobilization. Media outlets contest the claim that more than a million women turned out to protest, but still attest that the number was at least “in the hundreds of thousands” (Hooper 2011).

When I asked the three women what the biggest challenges are regarding Italian feminism’s future, all three of them continually referenced getting more women in government (SNOQ). They had no problem with existing structures and never mentioned changing the system that was in place, which was a notable contrast between them and their feminist forbears. One interviewee, Alessandra, mentioned that other challenges to feminism’s future included the need to grow and reach more women (an implicit call to mobilization, and an implicit nod to mobilization as one of
her goals), to reform the culture, and to get more women employed in Italy (SNOQ). She was referencing a problem that often comes up in contemporary critiques of Italian culture—as was seen in earlier references to statistical data, fewer than fifty percent of Italian women are employed, near the bottom of all female employment rates in Europe. This goal is complicated by the care burden problem mentioned earlier, as a more employed female population generates a care burden gap. The problem has not yet been solved, and there is reason to be concerned that the care burden is merely shifted to women of lower social status when women of the upper classes engage in paid labor. A future feminist issue will be to resolve this problem, which is exacerbated when women take on different roles than that of full time care-worker, and which of yet there is no good solution.

When I asked the about cultural tensions women face in contemporary Italy, they referenced their organization as a way to solve many of these conflicts. Alessandra mentioned that, in fact, Se Non Ora Quando was born precisely from the conflict between modern western womanhood and a so-called “deeply masculinist culture”. Another woman, Sofia, said that this tension could be seen in the disparity between the media’s ideal of Italian womanhood, the “veline” or “showgirl”, and what being a woman really was like. All of these issues were worth mobilizing for in the eyes of these women, and Se Non Ora Quando continues to exist in Italy today, still working towards these goals.

Mobilization is happening at the university level as well, and many new women’s groups are forming to respond to the gender discrimination that young women perceive in their culture. Luisa, a professor-turned-politician, referenced the mobilization she had seen take place while she was teaching at university (Mancini). She mentioned that a lot of her female students went on to pursue political careers, and that she had one student who went on to have a good political career and is now on the administrative board of her province (the “consigliere provinciale”). Many other women from one of her classes on constitutional rights in Italy graduated and have had minor political careers in their township governments. Still others founded the organization “Donne in Quota”,

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which is very active on issues of female representation in government. So, when asked about the ability of the university to mobilize, she answered that her classes produced both direct political activity and the desire to organize in politically active new organizations. It is worth nothing that she defined these organizations as new and different from those of “the old feminists” (Mancini). Luisa also started a Master’s program in Equal Opportunity and Discrimination based on her class on Italian Constitutional Rights, which she said had been very successful (Mancini).

I was encouraged by one feminist author I met who had written several books about ending violence against women in the Italian state. We were at a conference, and went out to lunch later to discuss her work. When I told her about my thesis, she told me “I want you to write that I have hope that things will change; I think things can change”.

Conclusion

Based on my interviews, there are several issues that can be used to help differentiate between second wave and third wave Italian feminists, and understand how they seek to mobilize. Interestingly, the methods of mobilization aren’t entirely different for women of the third wave. Protests are obviously still used as a method of mobilization by groups such as Se Non Ora Quando. The methods differ if one can expand the definition of what a “feminist” is. Under the traditional Italian definition, the third wave is not a wholly legitimate movement to begin with, and within the umbrella of the third wave, not all women seeking gender equality self-identify as feminists. However, if we expand the definition of the third wave to include women seeking to end gender discrimination and bring greater political and social equality for women in Italy, many of the politicians I spoke with are engaging in a new form of mobilization: candidacy. Formally campaigning politically is a notable difference between the second and third wave, and the reasons why have been explored in this chapter.
The actors are, as one would expect, usually younger than the women of the second wave. This was noticeable in my interviews and in the attendees I observed at feminist events. Since I primarily classify feminists based on organizational affiliation, however, it must be clarified that organizations such as Se Non Ora Quando were not made up of exclusively young women. The actors did, largely, differ by age, but more significantly they differed in ideology, pragmatism, and political attitude. Women involved in women’s groups founded after the 1990’s were not radical in the same way that the women of the Libreria Delle Donne or the Libera Università delle Donne were. Third-wave feminists complained about the government, and they still thought it needed serious reform, but they were willing to work within the structure, evidenced by a desire and willingness to achieve a greater presence of women in government.

The goals of third wave feminism form the biggest division between the second and third waves. Feminist philosophy was still discussed and understood by third wave Italian feminists, but I did not notice an importance placed on consciousness-raising practices or discussions of femininity. I noticed concerns voiced over the oppression of immigrant women, the problem of domestic violence in Italy, sex trafficking practices in Europe, and women’s representation were discussed much more frequently. These concerns are notable because they all have potential solutions in the legislature, both on an Italian and European Union level. Thus, it was both implicit in the problems that motivated feminists and explicit in mobilization efforts that the main goals were not as much an understanding of femininity itself as it was working within the society in place.
Conclusion: Feminist Research in Perspective

When I first traveled to Milan, I expected what I knew about feminism to be generally reinforced, even to confirm that my theories were on point and my study was on the right track. Instead of being confronted with the expected academic theory I had experienced in my undergraduate career, my interviews became narrative examples of how feminism impacts individual lives. I heard stories that described pain, love, a journey for acceptance, and a struggle for identity in the contemporary West. This forced me to reconsider why I was studying feminism in the first place: was I searching for ways to prove my own ideas about patriarchy and oppression, or was I on a journey to discover what is unique about the female identity?

The more I learned from women in Turin, Milan, and Rome, the more I realized that Italian feminism, and much feminism around the world, is about reclaiming true womanhood, not solely about overcoming historical and institutional barriers to success and participation in society. Another extremely important lesson I learned, and one that will inform all of my future research projects, is the necessity of seeing particular cultural movements through the eyes of those that live them. I assumed that Western feminism followed the same trends and had the same goals across Western culture, but my research exposed that not even Italian feminism is ideologically unified. Each feminist group I interviewed had different political and social goals, and consequently different reasons for seeking each goal. What they shared was a common interest in giving women a voice, which came to be the central pillar of my research. I had preconceived notions that feminism across borders had to have the same ideological formation to be relevant; I discovered that what is important is giving a culturally marginalized group the chance to speak for itself, and just as crucially, a forum to be heard. The women’s collectives I spoke with were sources of independent publishing, forums for discussion, and a means for political involvement. They provided the access points for women of all different kinds of backgrounds to speak their story. The importance of active listening
and debate was paramount to the success of each organization. I hope that in some ways I have reflected the dynamism of their voices in this research project.

Though the feminist revolution in Italy may not have taken the form of Marxist radicalism that many second wave feminists dreamed of, a revolution in Western society, and in Italian society, has indeed taken place since 1968. The mere fact that women today can ponder how to balance work life and family life is a direct result of the cultural change that second wave feminists brought forth. More questions have arisen, and more challenges must be faced, but that does not mean that feminism failed as a revolution. As society has changed, we have uncovered problems and questions that we did not know existed, and that simply means that the feminist project is far from over.

I believe that the Italian feminist case calls one to consider redefining stereotypical notions of what feminism is and what it can be. Italian feminism actively challenges those who might call our society “post feminist” and declare that feminism is over and dead. The women I spoke with revealed something wonderful both about the feminist movement and the Italian spirit, and the perseverance of both in the face of nearly insurmountable obstacles. Feminism is far from perfect, far from unified, and sometimes stagnant, as such a long term movement is wont to be. Yet, feminism is also something multifaceted, something that gives women hope that they do not have to live their lives in conformity, and challenges the fundamental assumptions we make about society. The Italian case provides a window into a movement that continues to give women words for that which is unspoken.
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Appendix I: Interview Materials

1. Basic Interview Questions
   a. Dove e quando è nata? *Where were you born and in what year?*
   b. Quanto a lungo ha vissuto in Italia? *How long have you lived in Italy?*
   c. Quali sono le sue origini? *What is your ancestry or ethnicity?*
   d. Ha fratelli o sorelle? Se sì, quanti? *Do you have brothers or sisters? If so, how many?*
   e. È la sorella maggiore o minore? *What is the birth order in your family?*
   f. Quale lavoro svolgevano i suoi genitori? *What were the careers of your parents?*
   g. In che tipo di ambiente è cresciuta (città, campagna) *What type of community did you grow up in?*
   h. Come erano distribuiti poteri e privilegi nella sua comunità di origine e che effetto ha avuto tale distribuzione sulla sua famiglia? *How was power and privileged distributed in your community of origin and what effect did that have on the distribution of power within your family?*
   i. Quali valori ha appreso dalla tua famiglia e da altre persone ed istituzioni della sua comunità? *What values did you learn from your family and from other people and institutions in your community?*
   j. Descriva la sua carriera scolastica *Describe your academic career*
   k. Quale ruolo ha ricoperto la scuola nella sua vita? *What role did school play in your life?*
   l. Descriva la sua carriera lavorativa nel [giornalismo]. *Describe your career in [interviewee’s field of work]*
   m. In quale occasione ha preso coscienza di diseguianze basate sul genere? *When was the first time you felt discriminated against based on your gender?*
   n. Ha la percezione di aver subito discriminazioni di genere? Queste esperienze sono state rilevanti nel permetterle di capire se stessa e la società? *Do you feel discriminated against because of your gender? Did these experiences have an effect on how you understand yourself and society?*
   o. Che ricordi ha del suo primo incontro con il femminismo o le tematiche femministe? *What memories do you have of your first encounter with feminism?*
   q. Quali considera essere i più grandi successi del femminismo italiano? *What have been the biggest successes of Italian feminism?*
r. Ha mai percepito discriminazioni di genere durante il suo periodo [da deputata]?
   *Have you felt discriminated against while you’ve been working as [interviewee’s occupation]*

2. **Follow Up Questions Based on Profession – Politician Example**
   
a. Quali partito politico parteneva e quali erano I posizioni relative alle questione di genere al interno di suo partito? *What political party did you participate in and what were its policy positions regarding gender?*

b. Che cosa le ha ispirato per coinvolgersi in politica? *What inspired you to get involved in politics?*

c. Come ha fatto il suo partito a mobilitarla verso il loro partito? *How did your party mobilize you to become involved as a member?*

d. Come pensa che i partiti politici possano mobilitare meglio le donne? *How do you think political parties could better mobilize women?*

e. Quali pensa che siano le più grandi sfide che attendono le donne in futuro? *What do you think are the biggest challenges women will face in the future?*

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