



Dive into the Waves:
a dialogue
between feminist
generations

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1. INTRODUCTION

The present research aims to contribute to a reconceptualization of the waves of feminism theory, arguing that the existent one is an oversimplification of reality since it explains the evolution of the women's movement focusing mainly on generations. The purpose of the research is to analyse the identified goals and approaches of feminism as understood by different generations of feminists, with the aim to discern perceived differences and similarities in the feminist movement over time both regarding purposes and ways of protest and communication.

A micro-level perspective on the evolution of social movements will be employed, focusing on the singular person who participates in it, and considering her as a relevant and rational actor when it comes to purposes, narratives and procedures over time. The main focus of the research will be on the goals and preferences of approaches of the women's movement activists, with particular attention to their group as generational belonging.

In order to do so, qualitative research analysis will be employed with a focus on the narration of the women interviewed, to listen and acknowledge their understanding of the social movement combined with an analysis of the goals and approaches they believe being the most effective to reach feminists' goals.

The theoretical assumption of the research would be to consider the structure of society as something that can influence the ideas and understanding of the people who are living inside of it, while considering also people's agency as impacting on the evolution of the social movement. In this research it will be employed by considering feminists' agency as impacting on the evolution of the feminist social movement.

The aim of the present research is therefore to find an alternative narrative to the feminist movement, which considers the complexities of each wave and which poses particular attention to each agent who participate inside the social movement.

1.1 Problem Formulation

The argument of the research is that the waves of feminism theory is embedded in a recognition of the feminist movement as divided into timeframe categories, each of them referable to a generation. This arrangement might obscure the complexities of the women's movement, therefore reducing its understanding to essentialism.

The waves of feminism metaphor implies the existence of defined waves inside feminism. On the one hand, it might be useful to explain the evolution of the movement over time. However, on the other side, it assumes that women and feminists of different generations are more than unlikely to share the same goals and approaches, arguably undermining the strength of the movement both from inside and outside. It might reinforce the idea that there is no connection or continuity inside the movement, and that feminism is a series of talking points that are achieved by different generations over time.

Also, within this conceptualisation, it seems that there cannot be real dialogue and understanding between feminists of different generations, creating a negative narrative of division, rejection and disagreement based on age association. Moreover, it is implicitly assumed that a person cannot change opinion about feminism over time, or a feminist cannot join the movement later in life. In fact, it simplifies complex phenomena while defining for each generation goals and approaches, without considering the particular perspectives of the people who are the real actors inside it.

It can be argued that this oversimplification impacts negatively on the feminists itself, and on feminism understanding inside society. It is strongly argued that communication has a strong impact on people's perceptions; therefore the waves of feminism metaphor can shape outsiders and insiders understanding of the movement in a way that can affect the success of the movement itself.

Additionally, the waves of feminism conceptualisation is developed with a US understanding of the women's movement, not considering different feminists evolution over time and space in the world.

Further, considering the research-topic in relation to social movements micro-analysis, which examine the agency of the singular actors involved, one could argue that the existing literature might present a gap in the research. As a matter of fact, most of the academic

literature concerned about the evolution of social movements over time is focusing on the structural reasons behind the emergence of a specific type of social movement in a particular time, analysing its waves of contention. The phenomena are usually analysed applying quantitative methodological approaches, and often the aim is to find cause-effect relations between the structural mechanisms and processes that are in place when a social movement emerges or develops. In addition, there seems to be a lack of academic research about the analysis of social movement development from a generational perspective. "Hence there can, and must, be constructive dialogue between causal and *Verstehen* approaches to social research" (Gubrium & Holstein ,2008, p.34)

My aim is to contribute within this research to the academic literature that argues for the dismantling of the narrative of the waves of feminism theory, aiming for a new narrative development to frame the past, present and future of feminism, focusing on the micro-analysis of social movements. Considering what mentioned above, the research purpose is to provide an answer to the following question:

How do feminists of different generations talk about feminism, its goals and its approaches over time?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, researches concerned about the same problematisation will be presented. However, in order to properly understand the purpose and framing of the research, it is considered necessary to explain briefly what is the narrative behind the waves of feminism theory and how and where it has emerged.

2.1 Background: Waves of feminism theory

The term *feminism* was first coined in France in the 1880s (Friedmann, 2002, p.25) and it reached Europe, North and South America latest in 1910. It is a compound word of the French word for woman, *femme*, and a suffix that usually indicates the description of philosophical theories and social movements, namely *ism* (Friedmann, 2002). With the word *feminism*, it is

meant a social movement committed to social change in which women's issues are considered (Friedmann, 2002, p.25).

When it comes to feminism and its definition and existence as a theory, there is considerable debate between feminists and scholars. According to Winter (2000), there is much resistance in defining feminism and its theories, which paradoxically seems to be the dominant feminist theoretical position (p.106). She argues that it is difficult to agree and understand what can be qualified as a feminist theory since a significant part of feminists believe that it is not possible to define it (Winter, 2000).

To analyse feminism from a historical perspective, the theory of waves of feminism is usually considered the most suitable and used in academia. The concept that feminism can be historically described as a sequence of different waves is originated and embedded in the US academic understanding of feminism. As Winter (2000) specifies in her paper, usually feminist theory is defined as "only, or primarily, North American and English" (p.109). She is arguing that when speaking about feminism in academia, usually it is referred to a particular type of feminism that relies on western culture. It can be argued that Winter (2000) is criticising academic feminism of excluding other forms of feminism, and, as expressed above, focusing only on a western, liberal and post-modern perspective, mainly of US tradition.

Nevertheless, the historical concept of waves of feminism developed being self-declared by a specific woman in a specific time, therefore forming itself outside the academia. The concept was first used by Martha Weinman Lear in her article *The Second Feminist Wave* in 1968 and then by Rebecca Walker in 1992 in her article *Becoming Third Wave*, in which she expressed the similarities and the differences between the second and the third waves of feminism (Chamberlain, 2017, p.34). The academia then appropriated of this metaphor to name the theory around the evolution of feminism over time in research studies.

According to the waves of feminism idea, feminism can be divided into different waves based on historical timeframe and generations. The first wave of feminism has been positioned between mid-1800 and early 1900, the second wave during 1960, the third wave in the 90s, and scholars and researchers argue that the fourth wave of feminism started in 2012 (Rivers, 2017). In the framework of the waves of feminism theory, much importance and focus are given to generations so that many scholars (Henry, 2004, p.3) (Rivers, 2017, p.36) (Shugart,

2001) (Bly, 2009) usually refers to a particular type of wave associating it with a specific generation. This narrative is also used by the media on radio and television when talking about feminism (Rivers, 2017). In fact, it gives a simple and progressive understanding of what feminism as a social movement is and where it is directed (Rivers, 2017).

According to the theory, women who took part of the second wave of feminism are usually described as *Baby Boomers* generation, those born between 1947 and 1961, while the third wave of feminists belongs to *Generation X*, born between 1961 and 1981 (Henry, 2004, p.5). Nowadays, some researches link the fourth wave of feminism to *Millennials* generation, therefore people born between 1981 and 1996 (Chamberlain, 2017).

Since the first wave of feminism was post-declared by the second wave of feminists, it usually does not have a specific generation of feminists related to it. It is usually referred to as the first rise of feminists in western countries, mostly the US and Europe, and therefore of many women from different generations that gathered together to fight for women's rights and political recognition for the first time. Hewitt (2012) argues that the first wave was the only one who received the *wave* appellative retroactively, while the other waves self-declared as such, as mentioned above.

Feminists who took part in the first wave of feminism were not labelling themselves as belonging to a particular wave; they were representing the women's movement. Hewitt (2012) is critical of including such a long segment of the history of feminism, from 1840 to 1920, into only one wave. In her opinion (Hewitt, 2012), it represents an oversimplification since with more than three decades of feminist scholarship at our disposal, this definition of the first wave seems 'seriously flawed' (p.659), as associated only with political recognition, leaving behind other women issues and demands at that time. As bell hook well describes in her book *Ain't I a woman? Black Women and Feminism* (1987) talking about racial and feminist intersections. Furthermore, the first wave of feminism was not a homogenous token; there were internal divisions regarding the "way a reform movement should operate" for example (Scott & Scott, 1982, p.17).

In *No Turning Back – The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, Estelle Friedmann tries to locate feminism and its historical transformation on a temporal line. She argues that feminism, as understood in the western societies, was born in Europe and the US

at a time when capitalism and democracies were emerging. Friedmann writes that "Feminist politics originated where capitalism, industrial growth, democratic theory, and socialist critiques converged, as they did in Europe and North America after 1800" (Friedmann, 2002, p.22). She argues that political feminism in those countries was born as a reaction to a forming society in which capitalism was reshaping interdependence inside the familial relations, economically favouring men and giving women a role of dependence. In addition, the emergence of new political theories in the frame of democracy was extending "privileges to men only" (Friedman, 2002, p.22).

In order to understand the concept of the waves of feminism and being able to be critical about it, it is important to get to know all of them, since the second, the third and now the fourth waves are dependent on their definition based on what has happened before, and they will influence what it will happen next (Bailey, 1997). Therefore, the most agreed about the characteristics of each wave will be described in turn below. The US will be taken as the reference country, as the theory emerged from there.

The first wave of feminism, mid-1800-early 1900

According to the theory, the first wave of feminism -or simply women's movement- appeared in the US in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention, lasting until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment of the US Constitution on the 4th of June 1919, when white women in the US gained the political right to vote (U.S. National Archives & Records Administration) (Hewitt, 2012). Usually, the first wave of feminism is summarised as the fight for women's suffrage, as this is the title of the book of Anne Firor Scott and Andrew Mackay Scott (1982). They describe how women were prevented from voting in the US, but they also affirm that the struggle for woman suffrage was just one part of the women's struggles during the 19th century.

Indeed in 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott made it possible for "three hundred people" (Scott & Scott, 1982, p.9) to meet and discuss women's social and political struggles. They adopted the *Declaration of Sentiments* in which they were claiming that the US Declaration of Independence of 1776 should have been valid for both women and men. With

this document, it is identified the "formal beginning of a feminist movement in the United States" (Scott & Scott, 1982, p.10).

Certainly, it can be argued that the main demands of the first wave were related to political recognition, but not only. In fact, feminists were challenging the whole status of women while making pressure on the institutions and, therefore, on the laws and political organisations. As disclosed by the authors (Scott & Scott, 1982), the fight for suffrage has been recognised as one of the primary purposes and achievements of the first wave of feminism; it represented the edge of a variety of institutional recognition and requests in the western world, "the suffrage became the symbolic focus of feminism" (Scott & Scott, 1982, p.48).

The change happened with time (Scott & Scott, 1982). The US women's movement was born in the 19th century, but it led to a concrete change in US formal institutions only in 1920. On the 26th of August 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified with a minimum needed approval of 36 States recognising the right to vote to white and rich women (Scott & Scott, 1982, p.45-6).

Indeed, the first wave of feminism has mostly been associated with "middle-class demands for suffrage and property rights" (Friedmann, 2002, p.25), creating internal controversies at the very birth of the movement. Women who described themselves as socialist feminists at that time and who were supportive of the general women's emancipation movement rejected to label themselves as feminists because, in their opinions, feminism was not speaking to the needs of the working women (Friedmann, 2002). Furthermore, also middle-class women did not always refer to themselves as feminists since some of them rejected the idea that women's rights could be inclusive of all women without race and class distinctions considered (hooks, 1987).

Scott & Scott (1982) remarks that "feminism as a powerful social movement did not emerge again until the 1960s" (Scott & Scott, 1982, p.49). While trying to identify the reasons of this particular timing, they recognise that "Reform seems to come in waves" (Scott & Scott, 1982, p.49). They describe feminism as an "energetic and persistent effort to achieve dignity and self-respect" portraying it as something different from tokenism; it represents a great energy that takes momentum in particular historical times more than others. Indeed, they

underline that in 1848 the demand for women's suffrage was only one of the many requests of the *Declaration of Sentiments* that were being re-appropriated by feminists in the 60s.

The second wave of feminism – 1960s

During the 1960s, a turning point in the feminist movement took place, and it passed through history under the name of the second wave of feminism, or women's liberation movement. Historians point at Dubbing Betty Friedan as the founder of the second wave of feminism with her book *The Feminine Mystique* (Bailey, 1997).

Second wave feminists are usually associated with the *Baby Boomers* generation, as stated before. The major claims of the second wave of feminism are recognised as economic and political equality with men as well as recognition of women's differences regarding sexual and reproductive rights (Friedmann, 2002, p.26) (Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2004).

Women started to re-discover the foremothers of the first wave, and Hewitt (2012) refers to this acknowledgement as a process of "historical consciousness" (p.658-9) when most of them were devoted to discovering the work of their ancestors (Bailey, 1997,p.19). In this sense, it can be argued that the feminists of the second wave had mostly a positive relation with their predecessors. Indeed, they usually referred and admired the first wave feminists (Bailey, 1997, p.20).

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan argues that in the 60s and before, women had to face what she calls "the problem that has no name" which she identifies with the assumption that women, to be *feminine*, should fit particular gender roles. According to society, women "do not want careers, higher education, political rights..." (Friedan, 1963, p.5), but they should pursue a life in which they are perfect housewives and mothers instead. This is how second-wave feminists argued that being a woman looked like in the 50s and 60s.

It can be argued that one of the concerns of the second wave of feminism in the US was the rejection of the typical feminine patterns and roles of women, as explained above. There was a firm rejection of gender roles as mothers and wives being passive and indulging their husbands and children, so that women could take "their existence seriously" (Friedan, 1963, p.300). Therefore, the dominant aim of the second wave of feminism has been to disrupt and disassociate women from the *feminine mystique*.

As the whole feminist social movement, the so-defined second generation of feminists was not a homogeneous group of women who fought for the same defined ideals. During those years, lesbian feminism started to appear as a form of radical feminism, for example (Walby, 2011). Walby (2011) refers to the second wave of feminism as a fluid form, in which women were gathering and organising themselves spontaneously. In fact, during those years, there were not many feminist organisations (Walby,2011). Women were usually gathering on streets, demonstrating and protesting publicly (Walby, 2011, p.54).

According to the second wave of feminists, “the personal is political” (Munro, 2013), meaning that every situation women experience in their everyday lives has a political meaning. At a large extent, one could argue that there is no distinction between activism and other positions in one’s life; once a feminist, always a feminist.

As the movement grew and more recognition was given to it, the 80s have been seen as the years in which feminists started to organise and institutionalise themselves, taking position inside civil society and organising themselves as NGOs (Walby, 2011, p.55). Walby argues that, during this period, the State became a tool to support and achieve feminist projects. Multiple feminist organisations started to develop tackling issues such as fighting violence against women and domestic violence. Some feminists criticised this process in which it can be argued that feminism started to fade away, adapting itself to the rules of the existing structure and of the economy. On the other hand, even if losing the independence that characterised the movement during the 60s, this change in feminist operations led to a more institutionalised influence, increasing the advocacy about the women struggle, and influencing the social structure and economy with a feminist perspective (Walby, 2011, p.58-59).

The third wave of feminism – 1990s

During the 70s and 80s, the concept of sexual orientation and gender identity started to be discussed and emerged in the western society, while the word *woman* and the related category started to become more and more criticised (Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2004) (Walby, 2011). These discussions reached a turning point in the 90s with the emergence of the third wave of feminism.

Contrary to the second wave of feminism, according to the theory, third-wave feminists were negatively connected with their predecessors. They wanted to disrupt the metaphor of

mother-daughter relationship, and moreover, they were in disagreement with the approaches and thoughts of the second wave feminists (Bailey, 1997, p.21); some researchers have defined the second wave of feminism as post-feminist (Walby, 2011, p.19).

Recognised features of the third wave are the acknowledgement of male and female gender as personal expressions influenced by culture and society, and therefore a rejection of the role of sex as the only determining female and male identity as understood in the western society (Friedmann, 2002, p.26) (Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2004).

In this sense, it is well illustrated (Friedan, 1963) that the concept of personal identity was a strong feature of the third wave of feminism, and one of the main breaking points with the second wave. In fact, the second wave was concerned about the rejection of the stereotypical female attitudes as belonging to women because of their sex, while the third wave was celebrating and re-appropriating the importance of the individual self-expression. Therefore, usually, third-wave feminists argued that second-wave feminists were using victim rhetoric, while third-wave feminists wanted to twist the rhetoric more positively (Walby, 2011). Indeed, third-wave feminists were focusing on the individual and the particular expression of the self, refusing specific boxes of categories in which the individual should fit (Bly, 2010).

In *Generation X and the invention of a third wave of feminism* Elizabeth Ann Bly (2009) argues that there is a link between culture and what people internalise as valuable inside society. She stresses, as expressed above by Walby and Chamberlain, that different experiences during time affect our way to experience the world and, therefore, our way of thinking. This is clearly seen through generational differences, and therefore it affects also feminism (Bly, 2010). She talks about the third wave of feminism being affected by pop and post-modern culture during the 80s when much focus was given to the self. Walby (2011) also argues that feminism developed during the 90s faced new challenges such as mainstreaming and universal institutionalisation of feminism and the new western economic assessment of neoliberal under-regulation (p.11).

As a consequence, also the way of doing research in academia changed during those years; a review essay titled *A New Generation of Feminism? Reflections on the Third Wave* written by Elizabeth A. Kelly (2005), a feminist belonging to the second wave, shows how third-wave feminists were focusing on autobiographical research that highlighted the particularity

of the self and personal experiences, ignoring academic and empiric work from the previous waves and not producing academic and scientific research themselves. It can be argued that considering the dominant focus of the third wave of feminism, autobiographical and personal focus in the research were in perfect line with its demands of a particular freedom of self-expression. It can be argued that post-modernism and therefore post-modern feminism wanted to pursue representation of the world that avoided universalism, dear concept to the second wave of feminism, on behalf of truthfulness and particularism (Bly,2010).

In this picture, the concept of intersectionality was directly considered and addressed in feminist discourses, and the white middle-class feminism heritage of first and second wave of feminism, because of political recognition and academic focus, started to be highly criticised. Appropriately, Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford (2004) write that third-wave feminism was "eager to agree to define itself as something 'different' from previous feminisms." (p.2) while disrupting "a white, heteronormative, middle-class view" (Rivers, 2017, p.13).

The fourth wave of feminism – 2012

Fourth wave feminism is described by Rivers (2017) as a resurgence of feminist ideologies. In 2013, Kira Cochrane wrote an article published in the British newspaper *The Guardian* in which she directly refers to the rising of the fourth wave of feminism, and Jennifer Baumgardner was talking about the fourth wave of feminism already in 2011. Cochrane (2013) argues that fourth-wave feminism is fully drawn into the idea of post-feminism that she describes, quoting Ann Brooks, as a shift from dialogues about equality towards dialogues about differences (Rivers, 2017). Indeed, post-modernism influenced post-feminism during the 90s and 00s, trying to disrupt the grand narratives, the dominant, universal and mainstream discourses (Rivers, 2017).

A pattern that seems to be descriptive of the fourth wave of feminism is its break with the history of feminism so that it can be described as a "feminism without an history" (Rivers, 2017, p.28). It seems that feminists from the fourth wave, as described by the theory, lack in recognition and will of discovering what feminism was about before the emergence of the fourth wave, which they belong to (Rivers, 2017, p.28).

One of the main concerns of fourth-wave feminism is recognised as the fight against sexism and misogyny in societies; as an example of fourth-wave feminism, Laura Bates opened

on April 2012 a blog called *Everyday sexism project* in which women can report experiences of daily life sexism sharing them on the website platform. An important characteristic of the fourth wave of feminism is recognised as the act of calling out, of speaking up and of making women's voices be heard.

In her book, Rivers (2017) points out how the fourth wave of feminism give much attention to individualism, and it can be argued that the concepts of liberalism, capitalism and individualism are taken and used by feminists to elevate the status of successful women. Indeed, some famous western singers are symbols of the fourth wave, such as Beyoncé and Miley Cyrus (Rivers, 2017). The concept of agency, choice and empowerment are highly considered so that it seems that the new feminist is a powerful, successful woman within a liberal and capitalist understanding.

According to the theory, as the third wave of feminists, also the fourth wave seems to employ a postfeminist approach to define and identify itself. In fact, it seems that the new generation of feminists are not acknowledging the diversity of thoughts and perspectives inside the movement, but there is a perceived general tendency to discuss and reject what has come before instead *a priori* (Rivers, 2017).

Intersectionality is perceived as one of the main key issues in contemporary feminism. There is a need to increase awareness regarding the different societal intersections and identities that affect women as a minority (Munro, 2013). It can be sustained that feminism is recognising its complexity and its need to escape a mainstreamed narrative of women's liberation. Following this argument, so-called fourth-wave feminism supports the concept by which before speaking one should always 'check her privilege', meaning that when speaking, every woman should acknowledge her background, contextualising her opinions and ideas based on her social, economic and cultural status (Munro, 2013). Therefore, this entails being aware of the mainstream white, middle-class, western understanding and description of feminism. It can be argued that fourth-wave feminism shows a will to include the struggles of different women, and moreover to be aware of the diversity inside the movement, as opposed to the practices of feminists who came before.

Some scholars define the development of the fourth wave as mainly concerned with the usage of internet and therefore the social media (Looft, 2017), while others argue that this

shift in the way of communication alone is not enough to be recognised as the born of a new era of feminism (Munro, 2013). Most commentators, Munro (2013) explains, recognise the fourth wave of feminism in its 'call-out' culture, as mentioned above. This is perceived as a continuum with individualism and ideology of third-wave feminism, the usage of internet and social media being the main difference (Munro, 2013); "the internet works both as a forum for discussion and as a route for activism" (Munro, 2013, p.24), even though its effects in the real world are controversial in feminist research (Munro, 2013).

In order to understand the waves of feminism narrative, its meaning will be explained in the following paragraph, with particular attention to its criticism in the academia, supported by the explanation of the mother-daughter relationship which is embedded in its understanding.

2.2 The wave metaphor and its criticism

The waves of feminism theory organises feminism as moving chronologically from a specific point in time on a direction forward. As presented above, each wave is associated with a particular time frame, with defined and clearly stated main ideas and concepts, led by a particular group of feminists with specific and definite perspectives, who belong to a particular generational group.

The theory of the existence of feminist waves relies on the usage of the wave metaphor as articulating the different time slots in which feminism emerged. In order to properly understand the theory, it is necessary to understand what exactly is meant with the term *wave* in this context. The metaphor will be criticised as following a conceptualisation of linear history and chronological time which defines only one way of representing feminism and its transformations. In fact, it is argued that feminism and its meaning changes over time, with a need for continuous redefinition and at the same time maintenance of previous meanings.

According to Elizabeth Ann Bly (2010, p.12), the usage of the term *wave* reinforces a historical narrative that implicitly refers to inevitable incremental progress, evolution or moving forward to a previous wave. For what concerns the waves of feminism theory it can be argued that the

usage of a number sequence strengthens this conception of progressivity (Hewitt, 2012), reinforcing the idea according to every new wave will be an addition, most likely an improvement, to the previous one (Hewitt, 2012). This means that the attention will be most likely given only to the new wave, which happens to be always better than the previous ones neglecting every space for dialogue and coexistence between them.

In the understanding of Elizabeth Bly (2010, p.12), the wave metaphor should be instead a meta-narrative. She explains how meta-narratives are extended narratives, such as general open concepts that include time-limited ones. In this case, the metaphorical feminist wave should be a meta-narrative for all the delimited in time waves of feminism (Bly, 2010). This representation assumes that meta-narratives find their realisation through different narrowed narratives over time and that they are themselves an ongoing process, without time-limit, always unlock to further improvement. In this conceptualisation, within the meta-narrative of the wave of feminism, it is therefore assumed that there are continuity and unity in the feminist movement, described as a wave (Bly, 2010) which can be shaped differently based on the culture and society that feminists are experiencing (Bly, 2010) (Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2004).

Prudence Chamberlain, in *The Fourth Wave of Feminism* (2017) describes how the image of the wave recalls the ocean or the water flowing. Therefore, it recalls consistency as an analogy for feminism. At the same time, she describes the waves as always crashing one after the other in a sequential way, arguing that in this sense the new wave seems to try to dismiss the old one (Chamberlain, 2017). It is a matter of identification and rejection: the new wave recognises itself in the previous one because part of the same ocean, in this case, parallelism for feminism, and rejects it at the same time (Henry, 2004). The next wave claims to be different from the previous one.

Chamberlain stresses the fact that the theory of waves of feminism is derived from self-determination made by feminists themselves (Chamberlain, 2017). This shows how feminists of different times described themselves specifying the emergent feminism employing the wave metaphor. It can be argued that they felt the need to define their uniqueness, specifying their differences and particularities, but at the same time recognising that they as feminists belong to the broad social movement. They refer continuously to feminism in order to better define themselves, either accepting or rejecting similarities and dissimilarities within the past

(Chamberlain, 2017). There are actions and reactions that are interdependent, one could say. They do not feel independent one to the other.

Henry (2004) gives much importance to the concept of identification and rejection when it comes to distinguishing each wave; she suggests that the second wave of feminism identified itself within the first wave, feminists of the second wave described themselves as making progress in continuity with the demands of the old generation of feminists. On the other hand, the third wave identified itself as such rejecting the second wave of feminism; Rebecca Walker stated in 1992 that she was representing the third wave of feminism while rejecting the approaches of the previous generations of feminists. She was declaring an ideological and methodological cut-off with the previous waves of feminism.

Chamberlain (2017) suggests that Rebecca Walker in highlighting the process of becoming the third wave was referring to the emergence of a new energy inside the feminist movement, with demands and methods influenced by a different society (Chamberlain, 2017). She argues that each wave is influenced both from internal and external factors and it has to be considered as "a form of energy that takes shape within a specific moment" and therefore, it is appropriate to its specific context (Chamberlain, 2017, p.27).

She credits the chronological understanding of feminism without linearity and generational framework, preferring instead to frame the waves as affective temporalities. This last image allows an understanding of feminism which is more cohesive and simultaneous (Chamberlain, 2017, p.27). She argues that specific moments and situations are what characterise a particular wave expression, independently from generations and progressive understanding. Mostly, she believes that each wave is the result of a complex variety of ideas that can be born new, mixed with old principles or framed differently compared to the past. She believes that feminist ideas are evolving with the evolution of society, this meaning that they redefine and reshape themselves to find a new position inside a changed societal culture (Chamberlain, 2017, p.30).

She further develops saying that the central limit of using the wave narrative as a tool to understand the evolution, and therefore the future of feminism, is the oversimplification of the historical facts and ideological content specific to a certain period. In addition, the waves of feminism conceptualisation refers mainly to the demands and achievements of middle-class,

white, western women (Bly, 2009, p.13), assuming a high level of homogeneity that does not explain the complexity of a specific moment within different perspectives (Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2004). Moreover, it can be argued that the ideas and understanding of feminism are multiple and varied even between white middle class western feminist women.

Also, the narrative about the existence of different feminist waves brings the assumption that the goals of a specific one are dissolved, achieved or they change completely when the following one emerges; the phenomenon is much more complicated than this (Bly, 2009, p.16). This idea is addressed explicitly by Prudence Chamberlain (2017); she writes how the waves of feminism have been quickly associated with a clear-cut generational perspective, not considering that for example in the framework of the fourth wave of feminism "feminists who identify as the second and third wave are still participating in, and driving, activism". (Chamberlain, 2017, p. 23).

The waves of feminism should not be perceived as separated over time and generations (Chamberlain, 2017). On the contrary, the narrative of the wave should be received as a temporality, being able to include feminists from multi-generations (Chamberlain, 2017, p.23). Focusing on temporality means focusing on the present time and to what is the social, political, economic and cultural context that feminists are living in the present. She argues that "Each temporality, while suggesting social change, is not calling for a total reinvention of feminism, just acknowledging that this incarnation must respond slightly differently to an altered context" (Chamberlain, 2017, p.24).

This conceptualisation of feminism as changing depending on specific historical moments is well described by Sylvia Walby in her book *The Future of Feminism* (2011). She openly states that "the explanations of these developments [arguably intended as waves] in feminism involves a multi-layered approach to changes in social structure, in political opportunity structures, in economic and political resources, in the framing of the issue, and in the development of feminist epistemic communities" (Walby, 2011, p.67). Therefore, it is assumed that particular moments affect the outcome of social movements.

Hewitt (2012), in her essay *Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor*, is trying to replace the wave metaphor of water with the radio waves. In fact, this last understanding is less drawn into temporal space, and it is more concerned about the use of

space, meaning that different concepts and radio waves of feminism can coexist and have a dialogue between themselves (p.668).

Many scholars and academics have criticised the use of the feminist wave theory (Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2004) (Hewitt, 2012) (Bly, 2009) (Chamberlain, 2017) (Baumgardner, 2011). However, they have stressed the fact that feminism is a real social phenomenon that needs to be studied and defined (Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2004, p.3). Therefore, in the academia, it is strongly argued that there is a need to reframe the narrative of the feminist's waves (Chamberlain 2017) (Bailey 1997), (Hewitt 2012), (Winch 2017), (Rivers 2017), being aware "that it flattens out the past and creates historical amnesia about the long and complicated trajectory of women's movement" as it is now (Hewitt, 2012, p.660).

Indeed, it seems that we are now facing the emergence of the so-called fourth wave of feminism (Rivers, 2017), and it would be beneficial to re-frame or confirm the narrative around the wave of feminism theory while researching it. Indeed, if considering the wave narrative as a meta-narrative and therefore as a process still in the making, the rise of a fourth feminist wave gives us space, new tools, data and an opportunity to re-frame it.

The narrative and imaginary of the wave concept, again, does not seem to fit and explain sufficiently a complex phenomenon like the evolution of the feminist movement. Moreover, it does not consider its contextualisation upon time and space (Winch, 2017)

2.3 The mother-daughter metaphor

In *Not my mother's sister*, Astrid Henry (2004) focuses on the relations between the different generations that are usually referred to the waves of feminism, specifically regarding the conflict between the second wave and the third wave feminists.

She argues that the relation between different waves and generations of feminists is usually described as following a familial narrative, in which the older feminists assume the mother role while the new generation act as daughters. This relational metaphor is widely used when applying the waves of feminism theory in feminist academic research (Henry, 2004, p.2) so that Rebecca Dakin Quinn coined a new term to refer to this typical relational metaphor

used in feminist research when analysing the dialogue between different waves: *matraptor* (Henry, 2004, p.2).

The *matraptor* and the understanding of the waves of feminism in generational terms, with a progression from old to new, shows the relationship existing between different generations as negative, comparing it with a difficult and conflictual mother-daughter relation.

This representation reinforces the assumption that naturally if one woman recognises herself as a feminist and she is born in a specific timeframe, she will share the ideas and opinions dominant in the society of that time, and she will have, as a result, a conflictual relation with what has come before. According to this representation, feminists of a specific generation will always be different from the previous ones as a natural outcome of historical events and generational identity (Henry, 2004).

It is argued that the mother-daughter relation as presented above, does not show the complexity of the feminist social movement. Instead, it reinforces clear-cut divisions between generations and therefore the aforementioned waves. It avoids a presence of continuity inside the feminist movement, and it seems that no possibility of dialogue between them is possible. Sisterhood seems impossible over time between waves and generations.

When reading about the waves of feminism theory, one should be aware that it is not an all-encompassing theory (Bly, 2009, p.14), and it is hiding several dimensions of feminist activism (Hewitt, 2012, p.665). Rivers (2017) says that this image has mostly been used to undermine contemporary feminism, pointing at its own internal divisions. On the contrary, she stresses that diversity of thoughts inside the feminist social movement should be perceived as positive since they allow feminism to adapt quickly to what are the new changes and demands of different time and spaces societies (Rivers, 2017, p.7).

3. THEORY AND METHODS

To support the need to re-elaborate the waves of feminism theory and its narrative while offering a different theoretical perspective, I will introduce the academy branch of social and

political science that focuses on the analysis of social movements' rise, development and shifts over time.

3.1 Structural theories

The attention to the study of social movements as a whole started to gain academic attention during the 1960s (Peoples, 2019). After acknowledging the creation and insurgence of social movements in the 1960s, theorists were concerned mainly with the reasons that brought people to protest, and they started to recognise social movements as a form of political action (Peoples, 2019, p.23). They were very much interested in analysing the structure of society, and therefore how the structure affects, influences, promotes or discourages the emergence and success of social movements (Peoples, 2019) (Jasper, 2004).

According to People (2019), there are two main theoretical schools explaining the logic behind social movement protests from a structural perspective: resource mobilization theory and political opportunity/process theory (People, 2019). The first theory argues that social movements arise and last during time only when the resources that keep them alive are available, namely human beings and economic possibilities necessary to sustain the social movement (People, 2019, p.24-5). On the other hand, other scholars (Tarrow, 2011) (McCammon, Campbell, Granberg & Mowery, 2001) (Diani & Della Porta, 2006) have tried within their work to connect social movements with the emergence of political opportunities during different timeframes and societies.

When particularly considering the waves of contention in social movements, Charles Tilly might be considered as one of the theoretical fathers. In 1977, he coined the term 'repertoire of contention' in social movements (Tarrow, 2008), arguing that protests inside social movements used to follow defined repertoires and strategies (e.g. include various forms of contention) which can vary over time. Specifically, this connection has led Tarrow (2011) to develop the so-called theory of protest cycles in the evolution of social movements. The core of his argument is that social movements face different phases in their development, as a consequence of shifts in the political opportunities structures present in a considered society (Tarrow, 2011).

Manski (2019), in the *Palgrave Handbook of Social Movement*, tries to develop what he describes as a movement-building analysis, merging all the most common reasons analysed by

different authors concerned about the emergence or shift of purposes of social movements. He aggregates them in one bigger theory in which all the reasons are consolidated together as a relevant starting point. Nevertheless, he is critical of the lack of consideration by the academia of the actual social movements' activists (Manski, 2019).

Indeed, the biggest critique regarding social sciences and the study of social movements is that it has been too focused on the analysis of the structure and its influences on social movements (Manski, 2019) (Jasper, 2004).

Structure vs Agency

In academia, it is often observed a dichotomous relation between theories that focuses on social reality analysing it from a structural perspective, and theories that instead acknowledge the agency of the people who participate and live inside the society (Jasper, 2004).

For many years, social science research on social movements focused on the analysis of them from a structural perspective. There are few researchers and academics who tried to implement theories of agency in scientific discussions (Jasper, 2004).

It can be argued that often the literature and research around social movements analyse them as a homogeneous group that interacts and reacts to a society in which it is inserted (Jasper, 2004). Most of the time, attention has been given to social movements as a singularity composed by different people but culturally understood as a whole (Jasper, 2004); the focus is on the culture of the singular social movement. Therefore, the analysis remains macro focused on the relation between the social movement and the structure of society (Sewell, 1992, p.3).

Miller (Haslett, 2011, p.103) argues that “we gain a much richer perspective” on society employing a theory of structuration which considers context, history and societal structure to build new theories of social movements creation and transformations. It is argued that there is a need to rethink and expand the theories around the structure (Sewell, 1992, p.3).

In this field of research, the theory of structuration of Anthony Giddens seems to suit the framework, methodology, and argument of the research as the need to focus on the agency of people inside society, therefore inside social movements. Prior to explaining the position and ideas of Anthony Giddens, it will be explained further the philosophical standpoint position on which the present research relies upon.

3.2 Constructionism as a philosophical background

Constructionism is a theoretical approach to social research that has been developed in the academia since the 1960s (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008), with the publication of the book *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* by Berger and Luckmann, first published in 1966.

Constructionism is embedded in the understanding and research of social reality as a place where “participants actively construct the world of everyday life and its constituent elements” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p.3). This means that constructionist theory assumes that reality, and more specifically social reality, is not existing independently from people who are experiencing it, but it is constructed by them through a meaningful process (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008); facts are not just out there, objectively. Facts and related actions are meaningful, and their understanding can vary depending on different factors. Constructionism helps to “specify the processes and practices whereby social forms are brought into meaningful existence” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p.6).

Constructionism has been widely used in academic research. Born in the sociological academic field of research, it has developed a “mosaic” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008) of understandings, approaches, and applications in a variety of different fields and academic terrains (e.g. social sciences, history, humanities).

Constructionism can deal with macro and micro questions related to sociology. The present research relies on the theoretical assumptions of constructionism which focuses on micro-sociological analysis. The attention is on the individual and how the individual constructs a meaningful narrative and understanding of a certain reality, that in this specific case is the feminist movement. Indeed, as argued by Gubrium and Holstein (2008) “social constructionist studies are those that seek, at least in part, to replace fixed, universalistic, and socio-historically invariant conceptions of things with more fluid, pluralistic and socio-historically embedded conceptions of them” (p.14).

Constructionism has been explained here as an ontological and epistemological background of the research and in order to introduce the theory which will guide the methodological collection and analysis of data: Giddens' structuration theory.

3.3 Anthony Giddens and the theory of structuration

The academic study of the societal structure has been embedded over the years in a very tight cause-effect relation concerned with the explanation of what kind of structure exists inside societies from a positivist perspective; it "tends to reduce actors to cleverly programmed automatons" (Sewell, 1992, p.2). As explained in the previous chapter, theorists of structure did not consider human action, or agency, as the focus of their researches.

Anthony Giddens (1938) is a British sociologist who thought about society as composed by a duality, namely structure and agency (Sewell 1992). He developed the theory of structuration in which the focus is on the individual interaction within the society; more precisely it focuses on the study of human interactions which, Giddens argues, shapes and defines the societal structure and practices (Haslett, 2011). Giddens' theory focuses on the study of agency, structure, power and change (Haslett, 2011).

Anthony Giddens is considered by many as one of the most important figures in the theoretical debate between structure and agency, and the father of the critique of structure theories that do not take into account the aspect of human agency (Sewell, 1992; Haslett, 2011). Indeed, he argued already in the mid-1970s that "structure must be regarded as dual" (Sewell, 1992) where it is true that structure influences people's practices, but on the other hand, it is people's practices that "constitute (and reproduce) structures" (Sewell, 1992, p.4). It is argued that there cannot be one without the other; they presuppose each other, and they are combined in a structuration process. This means that social reality is not static but potentially can always change due to the endless dialogue between structure and agency.

Moreover, Giddens has an understanding of society as more than solely a set of common rules and human actions, but also as a set of resources. This is a significant concept in the structuration theory of Giddens (Haslett, 2011; Sewell, 1992).

Giddens thinks about resources as somehow the tools and methods by which agents inside societies can express themselves, and therefore their will and actions. Social reality becomes an ongoing dialogue between structure as rules and resources, and human agency as individual will and actions. Both of them, structure and agency, are shaping and re-shaping each other over time (Haslett, 2011; Sewell, 1992); they are simultaneously the outcome and the medium to the other one (Haslett, 2011).

Particularly, Giddens names social practices as the medium between structure and agency (Haslett, 2011); humans “enact social practices and thus realize and act upon structures” (Haslett, 2011, p.103). Therefore, according to Giddens, social practices are constituted by human agency as expressed through social actions, and structure as rules and resources.

Social practices can work on two levels: the interactional levels of communication, power and legitimation, and the structural levels of signification, domination and legitimation. These levels are connected to each other through the creation of interpretive schemas, facilities and norms that constitute the modalities of the process of structuration (Haslett, 2011).

To provide an overview, actors utilise communication (social action) to create interpretative schemas (social practice), to give significance to their social system (social structure); they apply power (social action) employing a system of resources (social practice). Giddens distinguishes these resources between authoritative (towards people) and allocative (towards objects), to dominate the social reality (social structure); further, actors apply sanctions (social action), through norms (social practice) to create and maintain legitimation (social structure). As better explained “competent agents apply interpretive schemes appropriate to the context in which they are operating and mobilize facilities that they have access to in order to accomplish their purposes. Finally, agents apply sanctions to maintain actions they deem legitimate in a given context.” (Haslett, 2011, p.103).

In the explanation of social practices, Giddens gives a lot of importance to the role of language since the process of signification involves language codes directly, domination is expressed through language and legitimation is the result of normative forces produced through language (Haslett, 2011). As Giddens would argue, structure, as rules and resources,

cannot exist independently from language, and therefore from social practices and human will and actions. Giddens understands structure as virtual, therefore not concrete and existing in a time and space independently, but is the result of specific social practices, production of language. In return, the structure produced will affect the way of human agency and therefore human actions, in a perpetual reciprocal influence.

It can be argued that society is formed by structure and human actions, and that structure is enacted and takes form through actions which are the result of human agency.

In Giddens' structuration theory, knowledge and reflexivity have a great role (Haslett, 2011). Indeed, it is assumed that all actors inside society exercise their agency with the knowledge, therefore taking strategic action (Haslett, 2011; Jasper, 2004). Humans are taken to be accountable for their knowledge, and therefore it is assumed that they are reflexive animals, meaning that the application of their will and actions can change and evolve over time (Haslett, 2011).

Time is a focal point in Giddens' understanding of social organization; he believes that the basic study of social sciences should happen considering "social practices ordered across time-space" (Haslett, 2011 p. 102). The analysis of the socio-historical context of the interaction between structure and action is predominant in his understanding of society formation. Giddens believes that "all social action consists of social practices, situated in time-space, and organised in a skilled and knowledgeable fashion by human agents. But such knowledgeability is always 'bounded' by unacknowledged conditions of action on the one side, and unintended consequences of action on the other." (Haslett, 2011, p.103).

Agents are empowered actors inside the society (Sewell 1992). It can be argued that people living in particular time and spaces may use their knowledge and their values in the best way as possible according to them, to show and generate power that will affect and change the structures of society in return.

Sewell (1992) refers to Giddens division of resources as human and non-human resources (authoritative and allocative). Sewell (1992) widens Giddens' concept of resources, arguing that the existence of material objects, meaning allocative or non-human resources, and their possible utilisation for the maintenance or subversion of power "is not wholly intrinsic in their material existence" (Sewell, 1992, p.11). He argues that they are activated and

transformed from material things into resources when human agency encounters them; their utilisation is also an effect of a certain interpretation of the societal structure.

To use human or non-human resources in a creative way is dependent on the understanding of the societal structure of the individual who is experiencing it at a particular moment of her-his life (Sewell, 1992, p.13). This is to say that non-human resources are dynamic and not on hold to be used; they as well represent the creative outcomes of individual agency (Sewell, 1992, p.13).

The argument of Sewell is that all humans exercise agency through practices (Sewell, 1992, p.21), and they do this creatively. Indeed, human beings are knowledgeable of their context, or one can argue, they are knowledgeable of what they perceive as their specific life-moment context. Knowledge is therefore taken into account not only in the individual choices of social actions, but also in the individual creation of social practices. Based on knowledge, humans are able to act and react creatively in their daily-life actions (Sewell, 1992, p.21).

Assuming that all humans have the capability to practice agency, Sewell argues that this does not automatically mean that they will always practice it, or that they will practice it in the same way during a specific timeframe (Sewell, 1992, p.21). The potential agency can vary on extents, purposes and tools depending on the different position a person occupies inside society; the societal structure which the person is living in shows her-him “different kinds and amounts of resources and hence different possibilities for transformative action” (Sewell, 1992, p.22).

Enlarging the theoretical view of Giddens, structure in Sewell’s understanding is actual (Sewell, 1992); it has sense for a specific individual with a specific knowledge living a specific reality that has potentially the possibility to express herself-himself through communication, power and sanctions. Sewell argues that agents are also empowered by structure since it is structure that enables them to use resources to depict and create new social practices.

To conclude, as argued before, structure is dynamic and can change.

I will now describe the methodological approach used to collect and analyse the data of the research, motivated and led by the theoretical considerations above discussed.

4. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

4.1 *A micro-analysis of the feminist social movement*

To support the need of a micro-analysis of social movements, and in this specific case of the feminist social movement, one might argue that each feminist wave in declaring itself as such seeks an individualised recognition among the pluralism of ideas present inside the movement as a whole. In fact, the waves of feminism conceptualisation emerged from feminists' personal self-declarations over time, expression of some specific claims declared from a singular individual among the entire complex social movement, as stated above.

Based on this, one could argue that the singular voice who claimed the beginning of each wave of feminism was not representative of the whole group of feminists of a particular generation or time; she was purely expressing her personal beliefs regarding feminist purposes, claims and approaches.

Indeed, what I would like to show is the existence of a pluralism inside each recognised and established wave of feminism, helping therefore to modify the narrative of the waves of feminism theory. In addition, the analysis aims to motivate further research and analysis of social movements from a micro-level perspective. The argument is that there is a need to study the complexities of social movements with a micro-perspective approach which considers the contextual social reality that each individual experience personally, and by which the person is therefore influenced (Manski, 2019).

In fact, to understand the standpoints of the feminist social movement and its relation with the societal structure as a whole, it makes sense to consider it as a singular collectivity, for a matter of simplification and focus of the research. On the other hand, when focusing on the internal definitions and narratives of a social movement, I argue that the focus should be on the individual, on their peculiar understanding of the world and of the social movement they belong to.

Considering the purpose of the research, I will use narrative a methodological approach to data collection and analysis, which is guided by Giddens' structuration theory and the importance to perceive reality as a duality, formed by agency and structure. I will then include a thematic analysis and reflect upon it in the discussion part, answering the research question of the research. I will further elaborate on this below.

4.2 Methodological reflections on data collection and data analysis

The research is a qualitative study based on the collection and analysis of data through open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews. The interviews have been carried out via Zoom, an online meeting platform.

The interviewees have been asked for participation through e-mail and Facebook message. Every feminist was contacted directly and personally. I employed my connection as university student, and employee for an NGO committed to fighting violence against women to reach feminists of different generations and nationalities. Therefore, the research participants are mainly academic students and experts working in the field of gender-based violence. The research focus is on generations; therefore, no particular geographical area has been taken into consideration.

A total of 15 interviews have been conducted (Appendix A). Every participant was invited to suggest other feminists they knew who could possibly be interested in participating in the research. The interviews have been carried out with confidentiality, assuring anonymity. For research purposes, year of birth and country of provenance of each participant has been transcribed according to the given information. Each interview has been audio-recorded and then transcribed. Audio record permission has been asked of all the participants in the interviews. The interviews are titled with the year and place of birth of each participant. All the interviews have been conducted in English, except one which has been conducted in Italian (Appendix A, 1961 - Italy); this last interview has been translated into English subsequently.

The interview questions do not follow a pre-fixed order; they have been adapted to the narration of the interviewees. In fact, Bryman (2016) underlines that the researcher should be

responsive to the narration of the interviewees in “varying the order of questions, following up leads, and clearing up inconsistencies in answers.” (Bryman, 2016, p.483).

It needs to be mentioned that the interviews were carried out between feminists, therefore the women interviewed were aware of my role of activist in the feminist movement as well. This created a bond during the interview processes, with some of the interviewees asking questions related to my personal ideas and understanding of feminism.

In order to ensure the focus on the individual perspectives, a narrative analysis of the transcripts has been employed, guided by the research questions and the theoretical approach explained above. Here below the main questions are listed:

1. *What does feminism mean to you?*
2. *What are the main claims and goals of feminism from your personal perspective?*
3. *What are the approach and tools that feminism can use to achieve that in your opinion?*
4. *How would you describe feminism from a historical perspective considering past present and future?*

Then, based on the answers, a thematic analysis has been employed and used for the discussion part of the research.

Every interview transcript has a number next to each line of transcription; this is useful to identify references to the interviews in the analysis of the data. Each interview has been analysed separately. In the discussion part, the data has been discussed within the themes brought up by the participants within the framework of the main research question, theory and literature review; therefore, considering the feminist age group in relation to their ideas about claims and best approaches of feminism. In order to find another narrative to the waves of feminism theory, themes and narration regarding the evolution of feminism over time have been included in the discussion part.

To conclude, the focus of the analysis is on the individual, therefore not only on the content data. Indeed, the context is considered as the logical and sequential connection made by each respondent while replying to the interview questions.

4.3 Narrative and thematic analysis

The methodology used for conducting the research is very much connected to the literature review and theoretical perspective presented above. Indeed, the individual agency is at the centre of the research, underlining the importance of a micro-analysis of the social movement.

The interview questions are drawn into the theoretical assumptions explained in the previous chapter, within the aim to analyse critically the waves of feminism theorization which is based on the assumption that different claims and approaches are dependent on generations.

The questions presented in the paragraph above aim to explore the personal thoughts and experiences of each participant, without seeking specifically for objective or academic answers. The aim of the research is indeed to study the individual agency and in this specific case, the feminists of different generations' agency, as part of the feminist movement.

Considering Giddens' theory, the questions of the interviews stand on the conceptualisation of agency as the outcome of knowledgeable and aware individuals who take strategic actions in order to succeed in what they believe. Based on this interpretation of agency, the theory is here implemented in the sphere of the feminist movement, where feminists are willing to pursue a specific goal. Moreover, Giddens' theory suits the research in its comparison of feminists' ideas over time; in fact, he always refers to the understanding of society, in this specific case of the feminist social movement, as collocated in a context of time-space. Indeed, as explained in the theory chapter, agency acquires meaning in a particular time and space, in which the individual considers a particular action as the best strategic approach to match resources and goals.

At the same time, Sewell (1992) expands on this concept, arguing that agency is not only embedded in the factual utilisation of resources to pursue certain goals, but also in how humans apply them in a creative way; humans actively decide to utilise existing resources, to conceive new ones or rethink the way in which the existing ones are employed. Indeed, as explained above, inside society every agent will not acknowledge and utilise the same resources in an equivalent way.

The structuration theory has been used to guide the methodological approach to the research, focusing on individual agency in a specific context. Indeed, it seems that Giddens' theory with the inclusion of Sewell's understanding of it as guiding the methodology of the research have ensured a collection of relevant data for the analysis of feminism as a social movement over time from a micro-level perspective. In line with this, narrative analysis has been chosen as the most suitable approach to the analysis of data, since it focuses and gives importance to the people (Freeman, 2015) and their personal stories (Smith, 2016). It considers data in context, being aware of personal understandings, therefore not focusing only on the data itself. In conclusion, it justifies the attention to the individual agency as a method of conducting the interview.

To summarize, the theory of structuration has procured a considerable influence in the choice of narrative as a method of data collection and analysis, which gives importance to individual agency. The individual action in context is the central focus of the research. A thematic perspective to narrative analysis has been included. Following Smith's (2016) description of narrative analysis with a thematic approach, the aim is to develop an analysis of the narratives in which the goal is to reveal the participant's point of view (Smith, 2016, p.209). Using a narrative thematic analysis means that "the focus is on the content within the whole story - what is said, that is, what topically and thematically surfaces in the realm of a story's content" (Smith, 2016, p.207).

Since the focus is on the narration and the themes are connected and developed in logical sequences, a lot of attention has been given to the connection between topics, following the narration thread. This means that the narrative part has been given more relevance than the thematic in the analysis. Each interview has been analysed singularly at a time, to ensure attention to the individual narration and contextualisation.

Afterwards, a thematic analysis has been employed, grouping all the relevant themes mentioned by the participants in three different categories, namely goals, approaches and time. The main themes have been collected and listed in a table, accessible in Appendix B. The themes have been extremely useful in the development of the research discussion, in which each theme has been analysed in line with the narrations employed by each participant; the generational belonging guiding the whole discussion.

Further, the research literature review has been employed as a framework for discussion, considering the answers of the respondents.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Narrative analysis

As explained in the methodology and data collection section, a narrative analysis has been employed to each interviews' transcript.

1954 - Iceland

The first interview was carried out with a feminist from Iceland, who, according to the waves of feminism theory, belongs to the second wave generation.

The main claim and goal of feminism for her is for women "to get access to power" (64). Reading the interview, it is possible to understand that access to power, in this case, is mainly framed in relation to access to politics.

At the beginning of the interview, she states that she has feminism in her bones, "I think I got it from my mother and my grandmother" (59). Accordingly, in the first half of the interview (58-206) she refers to two turning points in her life that shaped who she is as a feminist.

The first one is the experience of participating in the Women's march in Iceland in 1975. She clearly expresses her feeling of belonging and inclusion due to the participation at the march, as she says, "This day... (sigh) changed my life." (85), and "I remember the clothes I was wearing, I never ever remember the clothes I am wearing, but in that day..." (88). She refers to the women's march as the moment in which she started to feel that women needed to "make ways to channelize this energy, this solidarity (...)" (93). She indeed refers to how much she was feeling alone before this moment (67), and finally, she started to feel part of a community, sharing it with all the other women (96-7).

When asked what are the main achievements that feminism needs to work on, she replies that there is a need "to be active in every sphere of society" (107) and changes the families, work conditions, politics and ideology (107-114). In general, it can be argued that she refers to the fight against social injustice (e.g. lower incomes, specific job related to women 110-1) towards women and to the gender stereotypes present in society. The ultimate goal is

to “change the society” (230), in order to create a system that takes into consideration women and not only men. She is particularly interested in fighting violence against women, which is a field she has been working for 20 years (239-240).

In relation to the tools and approaches that can be used in order to achieve this goal, and therefore change society and the embedded power imbalance, she argues about the importance of having women in politics. Political recognition is perceived as one of the “most important” and “most powerful” (125) actions that feminists have used to fight the social injustice related to power structure imbalances (137-149). Indeed, she brings as an example the conquest of power in the political sphere by Icelandic women, telling how women decided to take part in politics on their own terms (149). First gathering, then creating a party and proposing an agenda at the city council first and at the parliament later, thus becoming one of the first countries in the world to have a women’s list in politics (175-6).

She again refers to this as the “most revolutionary and successful way of working” (189), since it had an actual impact on Icelandic politics. Indeed, she says that after that “politics in Iceland changed for good.” (184). She says, even when women didn’t get their bills through, “we influenced the others to do so” (193), and that women used a different approach to politics at that time. She brings as example the absence of a leader in the party, or the possibility to change seat as often as needed because of child-care. This shows how the feminist movement not only wanted to bring more women to politics, but also to change the model of traditional political parties (168-170).

It is relevant to notice that when she refers to the active participation of women in the political society as the most powerful tool, she brings as an example the achievements of women mentioning Iceland specifically, referring to what she has lived through.

In addition, she suggests to always “try to have some fun” (198) while fighting the system. She advises employing a creative way of fighting against it, using other tools than the traditional ones (200-4). About this, it seems relevant to quote her words: “Do not ever take for granted that things have to be the way they are. Think! Creative. Forget about how to behave and... think, “What kind of system I would like to be part of” And then work for that” (213-5). This shows how the ultimate focus for her is to challenge society while being creative and being critical of the existing rules and societal patterns which are built on imbalanced

power relations between women and men. She indeed says that “once [you] got your feminist glasses, it’s simple, it’s impossible to take them off again”.

She also mentions the importance to talk and teach young boys and men how to respect women in the “sex life” and everywhere (284-5). Indeed, she mentions that women should learn how to defend themselves, but that “the world has done enough in teaching women to take care of themselves and make sure that they would not be violated” (287-9). The practice that feminists should employ here is to talk with men and boys to make them understand what is the problem, highlighting the fact that men need to acknowledge and change their behaviour (306-311).

In relation to this, when asked about her perspective on feminism from a historical perspective, she mentions the differences of approaches that younger feminists, between 30 and 45 years, have mainly regarding the above topic (343). She says that they are approaching boys and girls employing the same communication “using a very positive way” (311), without mentioning statistics and avoiding giving attention to the problem of violence against women perpetrated by men (310-1). She also believes that the second generation of feminists, that came “10 years later” after her (229) “have adjusted to the system” (231) when it comes to the approaches to use, even if “they also agreed on how important it was to change the society”. She states that younger feminists had more “hunger for power” (229), and they were not making fun of the system anymore (231), as she used to do in the past. She considers their approaches as “different from the ways I have been doing”, this creating a “difficulty [in] seeing the feminism of their way” (276). On the other hand, during the whole conversation, she continuously states that she admires and is confident regarding young people (264-5; 313; 337; 351-2; 361), and she is “willing to give them the space”. She expresses her opinion acknowledging that “(...) this is a change. (...) and maybe that is OK. (...) It is very possible that they will succeed in this way” (317-322).

It is interesting also to notice how she addressed herself directly to me during the interview, saying “it’s strange that you talk to me now... because it’s.. I... we are going just through a change in generations just now in Iceland” (333-4). It can be argued that this shows the perception of a lack of dialogue and communication between the different generations.

1992 - Germany

The second interview was made with a feminist from Germany, belonging to the fourth wave of feminism according to the waves of feminism theory.

When talking about the main claims and fights of feminism, she mentions her will to create a world that is equal and just for everyone (53-4) “asking all the people on the planet as well. And not just using one system that’s already established” showing her attention to the individual will (55-6). Feminism enables shifting “the focus of trying to adjust to a system that’s not just to everyone” (62-3) to the creation of a new one which considers different perspectives.

She also mentions the goal of making people’s identity visible and recognised, always considering gender in relation to “all the intersection inequalities” (72). It is important to make people understand that there are different types of identities (74) and choices. As an example, feminists should fight to support different people’s decisions (175) “condemning any kind of sex work that it’s like on... human trafficking (...) but also like pro women choosing that they want to do as work” (175-6). Therefore, the freedom and agency of the individual became one of the main fights as feminists. Moreover, feminism needs to give attention to the identity of the person who is speaking, while recognizing that we might have a different standing point because we are “an able-bodied person from a country that’s like super rich (...) maybe with a different class background” (304-9). It is clear here that she places importance on the contextual experience, and that no one should act like a judge towards others (309-10).

She states that feminism needs to build a common agenda, and feminists need to work together on it, even if they have different opinions (302-3). In fact, when concentrating on the approaches feminism can use to reach its goals, she focuses on the central role of education around intersectionality (72). To fight against the system, there is a need to rethink patriarchal laws and “how we educate each other and how we pass on knowledge (...)” (59-60). She talks about the importance of children’s education around gender (114) as a “crucial point” (115). In addition, there is always the need to dive into discussions with people that are open and willing to listen (95-6).

She also mentions a practice that she individually applies: “Books that I really like or stories that I really like. I give them away for like birthdays or Christmases and all that” (98-9).

In her opinion, it is important to “really catch people with their interest” (103), since feminism is “connected to everything” (110). In this particular regard, she brings this strategy as the approach that worked for her personally: “I got to the entire topic through music (...). And I did research of women in music. And through that I kind of became a feminist (...)” (104-6). Again, it is interesting to notice how the perceived best approach is found in a personal and lived practice.

She also mentions activism which mainly involves young people as “one of the most probably powerful tools in order to make people aware of it” (119).

At this point of the conversation, when asked if she perceives differences in the ways of activism between generations, she mentions her mother and her grandmother’s lives as example of women that “would have never ever described themselves as feminists”. She points at their background as living in the Eastern part of Germany after the Second World War as the reason for the creation of “a defence mechanisms against anything that comes from the West. And I think for her [cfr. mother], the feminist movement and all that is kind of a Western phenomenon. So it is something that the Western women needed (...)” (157-8), differently from the women living in the Eastern part of Germany. Indeed, she mentions a series of different struggles and achievements that were particular to that part of the world during the Cold War, compared to the Western part. It is possible to see that the spatial context is really important.

She then explains the evolution of feminism referring to the feminists of the 70s and 60s as “very though, (...) focused on sexuality, reproductive rights (...). And also very against sex work” (168-170). She states that as a young feminist, she has a different opinion (173). She then points at the second wave of feminists as being against and judgmental of transfeminism and trans women inclusion in the movement (179-187). In her opinion, this shows a “huge generational conflict” (194). After mentioning this and being asked for examples, she recalls the episode of a German feminist, Alice Schwarzer, “huge figure of the second wave” (202) who “was writing a lot about women’s liberation” (203), that has now Islamophobic tendencies (204). She argues that she is discussing Islam and Muslims when “it’s not necessarily your place. You’re a white, well-off woman from the 60s, 70s. And you can’t really necessarily judge (...)” (206-8). At this point, she expresses her opinion around feminists of 1910-1915 (222), considering their feminism might be closer to “our generation now” because they were much

more focused on fighting against invisibility (219), while the second generation used an approach that is more “their way or no way” (224), one could say aggressive.

She believes that digitalization is one of the main differences between the waves. Nowadays, there is the so-called “pop-feminism, digital feminism, network feminism” (236) and with that also a lot of co-optation of feminism (237). Because of that, she believes digitalization may be very dangerous (239). On the other hand, because of digitalization “any knowledge is basically present” (249), and a person could potentially know everything. This is perceived as a very big difference compared to the other waves of feminism.

In conclusion, she believes that there should be dialogue between generations, not only young people listening to the older generation, but also vice-versa (313) so that we can all learn from each other and being able to build a common agenda.

1967 - UK

The third interview has been carried out with a feminist from the UK born in 1967, therefore belonging to Generation X.

When asked which are the main claims and goals of feminism, the respondent replies stating her experience as being “brought up in a patriarchal home (...) dominated by my father and my brother” (48-9). She then refers to her postgraduate studies in which she started to “learn about who I was (...) and... how harmful that was” (56-7). Feminism for her was a “late in life realization” (59), when she discovered life being un-equal (60), and “an awareness” (71) of the need to fight for equality (169;151;186).

More specifically, she seems really concerned about fighting domestic and sexual violence, fields in which she is active with her own organisation (55;108), the goal being “making lives more equal and safer for women and girls” (224-5). Following her narrative, it can be argued that one of her personal goals is to make feminism more inclusive, and therefore more intersectional. Accordingly, she states that she wants to “urgently bring feminism alive” (185) for marginalised women in society (181).

She believes that in order to reach this goal, it is very important to employ a double approach; to consider female empowerment, but also to teach females how to defend themselves inside society. She describes these approaches as coming from two different generational perspectives (76); the one of her mother, and the one of her daughter. Indeed

her mother is “very angry about the #MeToo movements” (89) saying that women are presenting themselves as victims (94), while they “need to react in a stronger way” (95), “that is how women survived in the 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s” (96). While, on the other hand, her daughter “rejects that completely” (98), saying that it is not women that have to react and protect anymore, but the society needs to change. It is interesting to notice how she perceives both argumentations valuable, and she tries to implement both of them in her work; “I am trying to raise their voice [women’s voices] in a quiet way, in their own confidence, so that they can be that strong woman that my mom refers to. And also have the knowledge about inequality and society that my daughter might have, so I’m trying to bring those two positions together” (110-2).

She then explains from her own perspective that her mother can possibly support a more aggressive feminism which focuses on self-defence because of her personal story and experience. In fact, she says that “she’s [her mother] always thought me (...) ‘Someone holds you, you hold them back (...)’” (128), but she still remains a personal conflict to solve for the interviewee. In fact, she reports that her mother, while teaching her how to defend, was “still living the sort of old-fashioned notion of ‘I am a wife, I am a mother, I have my duty (...)’ (...) however emotionally abusive my father might be (...)” (123-8).

In the end, it seems that she considers both approaches as appropriate; in fact, she states that unfortunately in society women are still victims of abuse, “because the reality is that wherever there are predators” (153), and you always need to be ready to react, suddenly, in different ways, on the other hand, she agrees also with the position of her daughter, “we should teach men not to be rapists or abusers” (141). Therefore, it can be argued that education should be given to women specifically when it comes to self-defence, but they should also be empowered by teaching the whole society not to harass them. Feminism is a “double-edged sword.” (231). In fact, she firmly declares that “if we want to grow as a feminist movement to effect real change, we need to bring men along with us” (210-11; 225; 227).

When specifically asked about the tools and approaches that feminism should use to reach its goals, she mentions social media as “the tools that has got brilliance” (206), specifying that she loves especially Twitter; “I follow lots of feminists and lots of feminist movement video” (207). She believes social media being the perfect tool to “grow together and empower young women who are perhaps privileged” (208). She also mentions academy and education.

She highlights the main challenge of feminism, which lack effective tools and approaches in the application of the intersectional lens. Feminism should be inclusive of women who are coming from poor and uneducated backgrounds; there is an immediate need to “bring them along the journey” (244).

In the end, she focuses on the importance of communication when it comes to addressing people who reject feminism. She says, you have to “draw them in that journey”, being able to frame and present your argumentations step by step, adapting the language. (219) In her opinion feminism should not be judgemental, (216-7), but should try to communicate with them in the best way possible to bring them along the journey as well.

1994 - Spain

The fourth participant was a young Millennial woman from Spain.

When analysing what are the main claims and goals of feminism, she clearly states “pursuing gender equality” (24) and give “men and women the same rights and the same opportunities” (26-7), for example, economic rights (32-7), reproductive freedom (33), and “any opportunity in life (...) that has been denied to women historically” (34). When replying to the question, she indicates that she is “talking about opportunities thinking in our Western society” (35) and that “in other countries is different” (36). During the narration, she also refers to the importance of integrating different minorities of the population in the feminist struggle and employing an approach that is “not just based on gender” (97). One could argue that she includes inclusion and intersectionality as goals of feminism.

In her opinion, the inequalities in the job field are the most visible, but in general, feminism should be about fighting gender stereotypes (44) and create a world from the beginning, “like it’s day one.” (49). To do so, women should have the “freedom that a man can have” (49); “it has to be a cultural change” (58). She expresses her connection to women journalists in her personal life, and she refers specifically to the online harassment that women journalists receive in Spain (137-141). Being part of the feminist’s journalists’ group in Spain makes her feel that she belongs to a community and that she is also active in the fight of changing society (146-8).

In order to achieve this change, she mentions the importance of education. While talking about it, she mentions her grandmother and her mother specifying that she perceives

a difference in the way they educated her as a child. She brings as an example the act of whistling, which she liked to do when younger, as being associated with male behaviour by her grandmother and mother, and therefore condemned and judge as wrong in her role as a girl (73-8).

Following her narration thread, when asked specifically about the feminist's generations, she replies, "I think every generation is fighting for different things (...)" (86). She expresses her feelings of gratitude and proudness towards the feminists of the past (91), but at the same time she states that "Towards generations also the women have just changed" (93) since now "we're talking about intersectionality (...). (...) But maybe it was not a concept that they used, the first feminist wave (...)" (93-5).

When talking about the waves of feminism, she specifies that she is following the "Spanish new wave" (176) and that for example in the US "they probably have more waves" (193). She then mentions Jane Fonda as an example of woman who demonstrated in the 70s and is still demonstrating nowadays; she can "help connect us both or all the waves" (96). It is interesting to notice how while discussing she expresses a sense of difficulty in trying to analyse feminism from a historical perspective, because "the whole context is different (...) you can empathize with them, but you will never understand them", and your fight is different because there is something else that is perceived as fundamental over time (213-5). Indeed, she states that "maybe in 50 years, people will say 'oh fighting for equal pay. That's crazy. That's so obvious.'" (220).

In her opinion feminism can grow when a strong community is created. She feels that she belongs to the feminist community moreover when she participates to demonstrations and she follows social media. In addition, she finds the feminist symbols and images that can be on T-shirts very powerful for example (150), stating that "maybe it's a trend (...) but maybe someone is wearing it because she believes it" (148). It can be argued that this shows the power of communication.

1994 - Croatia

The fifth interview has been carried out with a Millennial young woman from Croatia, born in 1994.

When interviewing this young feminist from Croatia, the conversation starts with her saying that “feminism is something that comes from your own point of view” (30), and it is a different “way of seeing things” that a person can take for granted (50); for example, feminism makes you able to see the world as “filled with inequalities” and “injustices” (53), which are unable to be recognised without feminism since they are “normalized” (54) in society. Feminism “is not a movement, but it offers us... tools to view the world” (64), giving us the tools to criticise what is already there. Feminism is indeed perceived as an unconventional way to approach and to see reality. She explains that with feminism “I can see more clearly” (71). She discovered it with her sister through books and articles, then through the academy art which she was attending. She states that “visual arts have this (...) good feminist historical legacy” (89) so that in the end she decided to follow a gender studies course at University.

Indeed she highlights that feminism has this capability of always re-evaluate itself, be critical of the surroundings and also of itself; “sometimes feminists make mistakes or they disagree, but it [feminism] has this critical edge that’s constantly driving it to... come up with new ideas about itself” (39-40). In her perspective, this quality allows feminism to adapt to every social movement and include different fights against diverse issues and struggles, applying an intersectional approach. It can be argued that feminism is seen by her as an approach itself to social change.

Indeed, she identifies herself as a socialist feminist, therefore in her feminist perspective, she focuses very much on the importance of “class issues” (278), the main principle being that “we are all equal regardless of sex, gender, class” (297). She expresses the particularity of feminism, which “is exactly the opposite of this ehm... setting where you would create more inequalities” (312). In this case, it is possible to see how she considers feminism as an approach that should avoid focusing on individualism and be instead inclusive. Feminism, in her understanding, it’s the contrary of competitiveness. It is about being solidal with each other, respecting the values and perspectives of everyone (311-327). Feminism should be about diving into the “thought process without judgment” (300).

When collecting information regarding the ways in which feminism can achieve its goals, she mentions the importance of communication, and her personal will to “destigmatize this term” (127) in reference to feminism (151), moreover in Croatia (117). Indeed, she thinks that “rhetoric is basically everything” (161) and it is one of the most important tools that

feminism should employ since we are “facing the denial of sexism in our society” (163). It is necessary to communicate with people employing the right language and redeeming the proper concepts. Moreover, to reach its goals and overcome divisions inside of the movement, feminists should always engage in dialogue, share opinions, and find ways to collaborate (225) with each other.

When talking about feminism from a historical perspective she mentions the waves of feminism and how they are described as separate from each other, while she believes that history is division and continuity at the same time, “it’s very diverse” (192). She is unsure about if we are now in front of a new feminist wave or not, but it is interesting to mention that she believes the wave is always present, “it is this constant adaptation to new challenges” (195), it reflects a way to approach something that the present requires us to face. In addition, she thinks about the waves of feminism of the past as something that we should acknowledge, independently if agreeing or disengaging from it; “this is our legacy and it’s not separate from us” (248). In the end, she reminds that feminists should always be critical, and this should be perceived as a strength of the movement. Moreover, because being critical allows people to learn much more (333) and to be able to make mistakes (357).

1995 - Italy

The sixth interview has been conducted with a young Italian feminist, living in Denmark. She was born in 1995.

She perceives feminism as a “life practice, the way I live” (32). Feminism allows her to live as she wants (41-2), to express herself through her gender, living in a gender-nonconforming way (54-5). It can be argued that she associates feminism to freedom since she states that she is able to “make choices for myself without thinking (...) about what a woman is supposed to do or to be...” (60-1). It can be argued that for her feminism is the rejection of “gender conforming in a stereotypical way” (65) that do not allow women to live and express themselves freely. In fact, while explaining her position, she reports a life example in which while talking with her mother, she expressed how she did not care (66) about what people say in relation to her sexuality, being herself gender nonconforming, “being a lesbian” (68). Therefore, in her opinion, sexual liberation is one of the main goals of feminism (77-82).

She also adds the discrimination women experience in the workplace, and “so many things. Because I do think that it’s such a systemic overall, of... all-encompassing kind of issue” (93-4). It can be argued that feminism in her eyes is an approach that can be applied to “many different aspects” (95). Mainly she states that “people will focus on their, what they think are the main issues” (116). At the same time, she stresses the importance of not reducing feminism as a form of individuality and individual empowerment. It is impossible to define feminism in “a list of talking points” as the way a person considers sex work or wearing makeup (204-226), but the attention should be on the “systemic struggle” (219).

In relation to this, she believes that one of the main approaches of feminism is the human ability to “engage with different positions (...) in a constructive way” (225). When talking about the approaches that feminism can use to reach its goals, she replies that there is a need for two different approaches; bottom-up and top-down. Accordingly “women’s marches and the movements” (108), with particular attention to mini social media movements, and also “laws, gender mainstreaming and regulations” (103-4). She mentions ‘Non una di Meno’ as an example of the fight for the main claims of feminism, in which there is “one general idea, but then all the little chapters” (127) which adapt to the local realities (160-3), even in the smallest towns (128). In this way, she believes feminists can “reach society as a whole” (154), moreover through social media and employing powerful symbols and slogans, as ‘Non una di Meno’ (168).

On the other hand, she rejects the improper use of T-shirts with feminist slogans since feminism is historically associated with “anti-capitalism and connected issues” (202). It can be argued that she is concerned about the importance of the contextual adaptation of a general message into local realities, “people from the local communities can both recognize the general ideas, but also have their own kind of unique struggles and fights” (162-3), showing how important is to give attention to the particular.

When analysing her idea of feminism from a historical perspective, she mentions the waves of feminism even if she doesn’t “know that much about it” (182). She states that describing feminism as waves, “can be maybe a bit divisive (...) reductive of, of the history” (190-1). On the other hand, she perceives it as useful when it comes to making people understand what “the movement at that time was about” (237), even though she believes that

“people (...) seen as major figures in (...) second wave feminists, (...) developed their ideas into something else and then belong to third or fourth waves feminism” (239-242).

Therefore, she sees the concept of the wave as useful in order to explain the movement historically, but she acknowledges that it does not automatically reflect the ideas of the women who took part in it. She says, “it should be seen maybe as a kind of continuum of something that evolves (...) on top of each other” (244). In addition, she mentions that the conceptualisation of feminist waves appears as centred on Anglophone countries (246), therefore not considering that in other parts of the world feminism can have a different history (251-2). Again, the context is considered crucial. Concerning this, it is interesting to notice how she finds differences in the way Italy and Denmark approach feminism differently (137), Denmark not having as much as street demonstrations as Italy has.

1958 - Malta

This interview has been carried out with a Baby Boomer from Malta, born in 1958.

She starts the conversation immediately mentioning social justice as the main claim of feminism (17); she points at social injustices as the reason of why she entered the world of feminism years before (19-22). She adds that this was the beginning, but then “as I grew older (...) my life experience widened” (25), and she recognizes now the whole intersections of social injustice, as being a woman with a particular ethnicity, maybe part of the LGBT movement, or an old woman (25-8). Also, she mentions the importance of fighting violence against women (30-3), being this topic connected with almost every discrimination against women, from the economic to the power imbalances inside society, “you cannot just look at one, because it is all connected” (44-5). In fact, the patriarchy is seen as the hegemony, the dominant discourse in the whole society (46).

She strongly believes that feminism can achieve its goals only if there are solidarity and support between women, moreover in the feminist movement. She considers the creation of a strong connection between generations as one of the main approaches to use to fight for feminist ideals. Indeed she says, “my generation, need to be better able to pass on the baton like a relay race (...) to the following generation” (57), even if she expresses that sometimes the old generation of feminists might find it difficult (59), “because it has been our life” (64).

She also adds that not only the old generation needs to pass the baton, but the young generation should also be able to accept it (66). In order to do so, it is important that the old generation involves the young more, to keep the fight going (76), “to help make them stronger” (97). She describes this action as one of the crucial challenges of feminism, to make it survive and keep fighting (84; 97). She recognizes that the fight for feminism can be hard, “very tiring and lonely” (129), “we’re swimming hard to remain in the same place”, and the old generation should be there to support the young, which are probably more active (130-1).

The dialogue between generations is important because it makes possible “for the history not to be lost” (116) and to avoid making the same mistakes or adopting strategies that did not work in the past. Nevertheless, she states that they might be employed again, but it is important to acknowledge that they have been already used before (120-4).

Moreover, she mentions the importance of giving a name to the feminist struggles, since “you cannot fight something with no name” (174), showing the necessity to employ good communication and terminology.

When addressing the evolution of feminism historically, she mentions that it has to be acknowledged that progress has been made, “we have already come a long way. So my life has been better than my mother’s life (...). My mother’s life has been better than her mother’s life” (144-6), mentioning for example the vote. On the other hand, she states how “in part of Switzerland the vote was [only] in the 60s! 60s!!!” (155), showing that feminist’s achievements do not happen simultaneously everywhere; some of them are very recent. She then mentions Malta as the place in which only in 1980 the law allowed women to be able to have public employment after marriage (158-161). It can be argued that feminist history is described as being contextual to every country, at least when it comes to laws and regulations.

1961 - Italy

The eighth interview has been conducted with a feminist from Italy born in 1961.

She describes feminism as a way to look at the world with different eyes, “with eyes that analyse in a critical way the structure of society” (47-8). She mentions the feminist glasses by which one could see the reality “filtered by a different view” (50); every feminist while using these glasses can only question and be critical of society, recognising in it a “deep patriarchy” (51) everywhere (56). Moreover, feminism means “recognise this reality” and also “fighting to

change women's condition" (57). She then recounts her personal story, how she approached feminism when she was younger with a specific focus on violence against women which she recognises being "one of the priority" (68) being connected to the freedom of women in every aspect of life (71). She mentions that there are diverse important fights as "the right to get an abortion, the right to health, to divorce, to travel..." (72), but violence is still perceived as the "tip of the iceberg in relation to women's freedom" (71). It can be argued that freedom of women is the main goal, and she finds it strictly connected to violence against women, which she fought against in her whole life. The freedom to do whatever a woman wants to do (86;88) is the reason for her initial interest in feminism.

She then recalls her journey into the feminist world, in which she started joining groups and participating to manifestations and initiatives, until the moment when she was involved in the opening of one of the first women's shelters in Italy (95;169).

She believes that in order to reach its goal feminists need to work on consciousness and culture more than laws and formal rights because even if the last ones are essential to ensure equality, they are not enough (64).

She finds very useful at a practical level being able to negotiate with the institutions in order to be funded to realize feminist projects (190-3). On the other hand, nowadays, this is perceived as being not enough. Indeed, projects are important, but they alone tend to disconnect each other from a general "strong feminism" (198); there is a need for employing other strategies (200). She mentions the effectiveness of the square movements, the street feminism with young involvement. She mentions as an example 'Non una di Meno' as feminist movement in Italy, which takes its roots from the Latin American feminist movement 'Ni una Menos'. She describes this movement as "composed by many young women" (209). The main difference compared to the past is that nowadays, feminist movements are international, and moreover online (213). Therefore there is worldwide communication in different languages, "This allows the feminist movement to reach the world" (215) and create a worldwide movement. She brings as examples the dance 'El Violador eres Tu' which was first developed in Chile, or the 'One Billion Rising' event born in the US (218-221); both reached the entire world, and "one's fight becomes the fight of all of us" (225). Concerning this, one could argue that support between countries and different feminists in the world is important, and it helps raise diverse voices, giving them more attention and recognition worldwide.

She also mentions the existence of many feminism, different ways to be a feminist and to fight for feminism, from the radical feminists who live the grassroots of the movement, to the women who work with the formal institutions, or are involved in different aspects of society, as the singer Madonna for example.

She believes that feminists “should not perceive each other as enemies” (252), but they should build a strong alliance with each other, because they are all fighting for “women’s freedom” (256) and liberation from the normalised patriarchal one-way understanding of life embedded in society. Therefore, there might be different ways, but the focus should be on the common goal.

She then describes the dialogue between generations as relevant, since it allows “socialisation and exchange” (268) and provides connection between women. She assumes that connections are important since the youngest might undertake institutional careers in their future; however they should still be able to connect with the older generation and/or the new young one of feminists (267-271). Feminism is therefore seen as a way to perceive reality, and it can and should be applied everywhere. Moreover, different types of feminism should collaborate for the ultimate freedom of all women.

1957 - US

This interview has been conducted with a feminist born in the US in 1957, who is living now in Austria.

When addressing the topic of claims and goals of feminism, she states that in her opinion feminism is about all humans “to have more equal and more just and more peaceful world” (105). She quotes Hillary Clinton “Women’s rights are human rights” (491), stating that equality is not a sum-zero game.

She talks about power relations between people and distribution (110), one could argue, wealth distribution (132). Power relations are perceived as one of the main important issues since from this aspect develops a series of women discrimination such as sexism, violence against women and lack of opportunities (145).

The main problem that feminism needs to fight against is individuated in the men’s conceptualisation of women as possessions (115) in patriarchal societies. Women are not free to express themselves; it seems that they are a supplement of the men's world. In this regard,

across the interview, she refers to the “unequal distribution of care work” (177) that has never been asked for by women, and still, it is extremely relevant for the functioning of the whole world economy (180). In addition, she reports that through history there have been “great women, artists, musicians, scientists, academics (...) side-lined. Usually, they’re the ones helping the man. And very often doing the work. And the man puts his name on it!” (286-9). She asserts that a woman in patriarchal societies does not “have an individual personality, psyche, doesn’t have needs, (...) her own life doesn’t even have control over her own body” (118-9).

The goal is for women to have autonomy and make their own choices freely, without restrictions (126-132). The root of the problem is recognised in gender stereotypes normalisation inside patriarchal societies; it is about how mothers raise their children (226) and especially girls, which internalise gender roles and societal norms (230), for example to not be smarter than guys, to babysit to make extra money, to do not contradict, to look pretty, etc. (220-6).

In addition, she believes that people should be able to define their identities for themselves, especially in regard to which gender they want to identify with. She refers to trans-women as an example.

Feminism is about social justice, equal opportunity and self-expression (472-6). In the whole interview, it is possible to find references to the issue of care work. She also reports an example of normalised gender norms in her own life experience, by saying that “I say that as somebody who did two loads of laundry yesterday” (300), while ironically describing herself as “a feminist who leaves her feminist credentials at the door when she walks into her apartment. (...) bringing home the groceries and making the dinner...” (304-315). This shows how feminists are affected by the system as well, because raised and socialised in it. This is one challenge of being a feminist; sometimes you get caught in the system too. On the other hand, she believes it is a matter of attitude that needs to be changed (319).

In her opinion, it is not clear and defined how feminism can move forward, but surely women in decision-making positions can help achieve feminists’ goals (153;168), moreover in nowadays when it seems that governments are “stripping away women’s rights” (164), she says, “certainly in my home country” (163). In her opinion, more women in leading positions

can help to overcome power imbalances not only within actual presence, but also with decisions who might guide society towards equality. It can be argued that having women in decision making positions is a goal and an approach at the same time (165-174).

In her opinion then, women and feminists should wear the “gender lens” (199), that means they should apply a women’s perspective on reality. It can be argued again that feminism is about being critical and recognising the deleterious normalisation inside society, focusing much more on “meeting human needs” (216) with the use of cooperation and collaboration as opposed to competition and division (217). It is about applying a social justice approach. Moreover, she adds the importance to the recognition of intersectional inequalities in society (334-6). Using a feminist perspective is to recognise one’s privilege in every aspect of life (427-451). In addition, it is relevant to mention that she asked me directly if I was interviewing only white feminists, commenting that if that was the case “Then I would make a point, I would make clear that (...) you address that” (447-9) showing how this topic is particularly important for her.

She reminds the importance to always be vigilant about rights achievements, because they “will never be vetted” (380); they can be easily taken away. In this respect, she mentions the importance of being attentive, starting moreover from the young generation. Sometimes it seems that the younger generation is rejecting the achievements of the past and it is taking for granted rights that “their mothers (...) or certainly their grandmothers didn’t have” (371). She mentions the case of a German feminist, Alice Schwarzer, who was supposed to come and talk at the University of Vienna, and younger feminists did not want to listen to *a priori* (357-360). It seems that she wants to express her feeling towards the young generation as not acknowledging and considering the history of feminism.

On the other hand, she recognises that there have been achievements during years, considering the progress made since the first wave of feminists which started in the US (345) with the recognition of votes for women in 1919 and in Austria in 1918 (266) until the improvements in the fights against sexual and domestic violence. Indeed “more people are, are aware of these issues” (411). Moreover, she sees young feminists doing great work and being concerned about gender and climate justice, for example (247-9).

1972 - UK

The interview was conducted with a woman of the third wave of feminism according to the theory, from the UK.

She starts the conversation explaining how feminism is part of her life since she is born (52) as a reaction to the presence of stereotypical gender roles inside her family (50-1). She defines a turning point in her life becoming a mother and perceiving inequalities differently, realising how much different was “the impact that the child rearing had on the mother compared to that of the father” (57-8). Especially becoming a mother of 2 boys (59) felt like a personal challenge and responsibility, to “bring them up (...) [as] feminist allies” (61).

Getting older was a realisation of even more inequalities, she says “your feminism changes” (67) because “your position in society changes” (68). In her argumentation, it is possible to see how patriarchy in her opinion affects women, and older women in a particular way because no young anymore. She states that feminism changes at every point and stage of our lives (77), is relevant in different ways (82). The struggle changes within age.

She describes herself as a radical feminist (162), and she believes feminism should be about the “liberation of (...) women from men oppression” (161). Feminism should pursue “a whole new system” (162;166;170;237). She reports some examples about how her students sometimes do not recognise the gender discrimination which they are subjected to, until it is spoken about. It is normalised (277). She finds beauty standards coming from society as one of the main struggles for women, moreover nowadays, in which women are pressured to conform to “very gendered views of beauty” (128;134;140); if they do not perform in line with those, “they are attacked!” (141). She associates this practice more with a younger women’s struggle, which is increased by social media. Indeed, social media is perceived in a negative form (127).

When addressing the tools that feminism should employ to achieve its ambitions, she names education, which needs to start “from a very young age” (189). It is needed to change the normalisation of gender roles inside the society (200-3).

The way to make education effective is to take men on board (208), she says that “men need to be far more vocal in talking about, you know, how they feel about patriarchy as much as women feel about patriarchy” (210). In her opinion, the change must happen step by step,

incrementally, therefore not with a “big event happening” (238), one could argue, as a demonstration or manifestation. Indeed, she recognises that it is a slow process (240)

When putting this statement in the framework of feminism from a generational perspective, she recognises that some improvement has been achieved compared to “my mother’s generation” (249) for example. She recalls an example of sexual harassment at the workplace, which happened to her mother when she was young (256-267). She states that this “would no longer be acceptable” today (267).

On the other hand, the existence of the #MeToo movement and the Everyday Sexism Project, which are vocal and report sexual harassment nowadays, and the Harvey Weinstein case, the Hillary Clinton’s run to presidency reaction (293) show that in reality, we did not move much far ahead (272-5;294). It can be argued that the normalisation of it is still present in society, but differently now women have more opportunity to speak and report the discriminations.

She indeed believes that there has been a huge “shift in how they [young feminists] view things compared to my... (...) not so much my generation, but my parents’ generation” (288-9). Particularly she sees the big shift happening between her and her mother’s generation (325;340), because of women at work, bodily autonomy, access to education, economic autonomy, sexual liberation, reproductive rights (311-6). She points at social media as being the only difference between her generation and “your generation” (302-318). In addition, she recognises that young feminists are more vocal and are re-evaluating feminism without hesitations compared to the past (435), showing the importance of communication.

Moreover, she believes that feminists should employ solidarity with each other and be able to discuss using different tools (395). Indeed, one struggle inside the movement is the division regarding specific topics, as the trans topic or sex workers (352;385) which she argues online communication does not help to solve (362). In this respect, she does not believe it is a matter of young against older feminists, but that the debate “is damaged across the board” (369). Feminists should listen and support more each other, also between generations.

1995 - Croatia

During this interview, a young feminist from 1995 and born Croatia was interviewed.

In her opinion, feminism should be about “fighting for equality for all” (51) against patriarchy, gender roles (163-7), gender stereotypes (129) and “creating a society that works for everyone” (54), including women and men, queer and LGBTI (53), “leaving no one behind basically” (59). She stresses the importance to include trans women in the movement, arguing that some feminists of the old generations show a lack of solidarity when it comes to trans women (81), specifically referring to “Gen Xers” (100).

She believes that feminism can reach its goals starting from education (128) which is perceived as the “most important step” (142). In addition, she believes that there should be a double education standard, meaning teaching girls that they have the same possibilities and capabilities as men, but also to men that “they have more options” (154). With this last statement she means that men should understand that there are other possibilities than “to hate women and what not” (157), involving therefore a cultural change. Indeed, women need to learn self-defence, but at the same time, men should learn not to practice toxic masculinity. She believes “you can’t just focus on one” way of education, we need both (155).

She also supports feminists to be more vocal on online platforms, since the “whole conversation is shifting on the Internet” (132). She points out the importance of communication and of the responsibility of feminists to pass correct information about what feminism is and what wants to achieve (133-5). She mentions the importance of presenting academic and factual evidence in order to support the feminist cause (137).

When approaching the evolution of feminism over time, it is clear in the whole interview transcript that she is not standing the slowness by which the feminist movement has collected achievements towards time, “I cannot wait a-hundred years for people, society, to realise (...)” (177). This argument is introduced in the struggle between the old and young generation of feminists. It seems that she is really concerned about feminists being “too relaxed” (256) in the fight for feminists’ goals. Moreover, the ones from the older generation, compared to the younger generation of 16-17 years old who is very vocal and “much more progressive than the generations before” (249). She says that she acknowledges the progress that has been made but stresses the fact that we should not stop there, being happy and content. This is recognised as one of the main struggles with the older generation (287-291), even though some of them “are still very active” (286). It can be said that there she doesn't feel the old generation of feminists as supportive and solidal, but on the contrary, it seems to

her that they focus on what they have done, and that it was harder for them (291-9) instead of on what needs to be done still. She perceives this as an anti-feminist approach since feminism should fight the notion that “there is a limit to women’s rights, and we should be happy with what we get” (303). The behaviour of a “significant amount of them” (311) is described as “almost condescending” (309). It is important to state that during the whole interview, it is not always clear when she is referring about the older generations in general or specifically at the old generation of feminists. In fact, when asked she states she is not sure about it, and probably it happens less in the feminist world than the general one, but “it bothers me more when it comes from feminists” (349), and she mentions her mother as an example of feminist who is not supportive and tries to cut-off the anger and energy of the new generation (338). In addition, she believes that there are not main differences regarding the “core of feminism” such as equal pay and eliminating violence against women, but on the other hand, there is a lot of debate around other issues, that are more controversial, as the inclusion of the trans women (361-7). She believes that it is “obviously the old generation” (390) who is against it, and that “there is a clear connection between the age and the way someone’s like to agree with me” (376-7). She assumes that this is because they lived “different circumstances” (418). In conclusion, she argues that these division do not help the movement as a whole, in fact as a result, it becomes easier to attack, making it losing credibility. (396-402).

1987 - US

The present interview has been conducted with a woman born in the US in 1987, who is living now in Austria.

In her opinion, the main goal of feminism is reaching equality between genders but also considering other forms of inequality as “systemic racism” (52). Therefore, there is a need to apply an intersectional approach when claiming equality. She expresses her hope to see feminism disappearing in the future, because there will be “no longer a need for it?” (69), meaning that the fight against cultural stereotypes has been overcome. In addition, she explains that equality has to match with equity, meaning the access to equal opportunities should be taken into consideration; people might start from different positions in society (76-8).

According to her understanding, feminism can achieve these applying an intersectional approach, and moreover being able to change legislations (84). In fact, she believes that even if there are many ideas and there is a slight change inside society, the real change will be recognised by the majority of people only when it is formal, meaning that there is a law behind it (86-9).

In addition, she points at the importance of research and data collection since they can be the proof upon law can be built on. In this regard, she mentions the importance of giving a proper name to different issues, in order to see and recognise a problem and therefore ask and advocate for a solution. She brings as an example violence against women: Eastern European countries do not have data about it, and it is unlikely that they will develop laws concerned with preventive measures and service-supports for victims of violence. Naming issues and phenomena is the only way to make them real (94-104). Terminology and awareness are crucial tools (109), together with spreading information so that it can reach most people as possible (133). Indeed, she recalls when she was still in the US, and during university a lot of focus was given to racism and racist issues, she believes because of the country history, while gender was not addressed (181). She says that she started to recognise gender inequalities when she started to travel to different countries and continents. Before she “was very privileged, [with a] close-minded perspective” (129), showing again how much context is relevant.

She also believes that internet and social media help very much the talk about gender issues. She states, “30 years ago you didn’t see into the bedroom of a person over in like Afghanistan, how they’re dressing, how they look” (163), so now “you have a perspective of how people are living” (164). It is clear that particular importance is given to the context of different realities and being able to share different experience make the individual more aware of the system; it gives a person a more international mindset compared to the past (275;273-280). Again, it can be argued that it is a way to be critical. Indeed, in her opinion social media helps to make the notion of talking about these issues more normal, even mainstream, than in the past. She mentions as examples #MeToo movement and the Harvey Weinstein case (167-174).

When speaking about feminism from a historical perspective, she considers herself as belonging to the older generation in comparison to the younger generation that it is really

outspoken and able to be so free about the expression of their identities and sexuality (153-5). She believes that she also feels part of the new generation when for example she compares herself to the Austrian movement *Oman Gegen Rechts* (Grandmothers against right-wing), but it is always a matter of situation (203-2011). She believes that it depends a lot on individual personality, but she also thinks that young people are probably more open to being critical of reality than the older generations (238-240). She states the importance of social media again as a way to recognise faster the normalised reality, while women before social media took more time to have this realisation. Most of them grew up from religious families and lived in a more closed world, less rich of different information in terms of content, therefore it can be that the older generations started to recognise that only later when entering university for example (215-222).

On the other side, she doesn't believe that feminists can be placed in different categories based on the generation which they belong to, since it is a matter of individuality, "very complicated and overlapping" (252). Nevertheless, she refers to the concept of the waves of feminism as an easy way to describe the history of the feminist movement.

1992 - Spain

The thirteenth interview has been conducted with a woman from Spain, born in 1992.

The Millennial feminist from Spain believes that the main goal of feminism is reaching equality between men and women, and in addition feminism should be about living in a society that also cares about equity (39-42).

She claims that feminism should be inclusive of every person, no matter which kind of gender they identify with. In addition, she thinks that feminism is strictly connected with theories of anti-racism and anti-capitalism. Feminism which considers only gender is not enough. In her opinion, it should have an intersectional approach, considering gender as intersecting with other inequalities that take also in consideration the different understanding of feminism.

She believes that feminism is very complex (85), and there are many feminisms (74). The roots of the problem being the structure of society, the capitalist system, power and cultural relations, gender roles, patriarchal superiority... but women's demands are different in every culture and every situation (108). Indeed, she brings an example of gipsy women, who

in Spain should have more political representation as women part of minorities, while she, as a middle-class white feminist, does not need more political representation. Instead, she needs more to feel safe when she walks towards home in the night for example (111-123). In her opinion, people should be aware of the context (121).

She points at education as the key to where to start working to achieve feminists' goals, not only in schools, but it is a matter of social and cultural education. This change should happen in every sphere of society, of life, indeed "culture is everywhere" (176). She strongly believes that people should inform themselves through books with a feminist approach, and they could be very different since again, there are many feminisms (202). Study and research are important in this regard (206-9;215-8), and she stresses how important it is to always "do analysis in context" (277), but not only. In fact, academic research is valuable, but information should also come by the grassroots experiences of women living outside the mainstream western world (219-223). She also refers to the fact that feminism should not only be related to gender of women's rights, but every workplace and job position can be approached with gender and feminist perspective (193-6).

Since feminism is complex and there are different feminisms, her solution is to keep reading and debate. Women need to discuss, debate, learn and listen much more than talking (343-364).

When asked about feminism from a historical perspective, she makes clear that her opinion is probably changed compared to the previous year, because she is reading and talking about feminism every day that it is an internal evolution. Indeed, she says "feminism is an ongoing process" (252), "not a status" (247) in which people learn and change their opinions all the time. She believes that feminism goes with the time, and in Spain it was probably understandable to be more aggressive as a feminist in the 60s. The reason is that just because a woman could not be aggressive, her gender role normalisation in society was preventing her from being aggressive. Therefore, being aggressive was the most rebel action to do in order to subvert societal norms (272-280). Every action needs to be seen in context.

Later, she compares this to the present time, in which women have other types of resources in Spain. Again, she states that "probably indigenous women, they can only use violence right now in their contexts" (282-3). Following this statement, she mentions how

much important is to understand that it is not always possible to judge, because there are many factors that make what could seem the same situation different from another (392-400).

1993 - Moldova

This interview has been carried out with a Millennial feminist from Moldova, born in 1993.

A young feminist from the Republic of Moldova believes that one of the main problems in Moldova is violence against women, since it is very much normalised inside society. Indeed, she reports a case of domestic violence happening to her mother, but still, the action being accepted by society. This is told as the reason why they moved from Moldova to Italy for some years. In her opinion feminism should fight to make possible that women are respected as everyone (74). She states that violence against women for her is one of the main topics because of her past (76).

She adds that feminism is about equality and equal opportunities between people (132-4). In this perspective, intersectionality has a central role, since feminism is about fighting oppression and imposed gender roles and stereotypes (447) to free women from imposed rules of society, but not only (106-120). Feminism is perceived as an approach for the liberation of all people, and mainly women being the most oppressed group (117). Women should be free to make the decisions that they want to take in their life, always.

In her opinion feminism should employ a needs-based approach towards women's rights (88), meaning that there is no superior general need that works for everyone, but that the individual is situational. Feminism should support women to "find their own solutions" (87) while listening to hearing the voices of people and understanding them. Indeed, she states that every woman is different and has multiple identities inside society, which shape her particular individual context (98-102). Different identities imply different challenges and therefore different needs. Again, the importance of intersectionality is one of the main topics in her narrative (106), and it is connected not only to women and gender but to all the inequalities people suffer.

She suggests that for the Moldovan reality the institutional change is not enough; there is a need to change the culture itself, because laws alone do not help if in the end "we do not really support women to become independent" (138) in the day to day life. The key to achieving this change found in education (162;196;202), formal and "informal education" (173); there is

a need to educate the entire society (165) and free it from gender stereotypes and gender roles (169-191).

In order to do so, feminists should “be furious”, moreover in Moldovan society that sees violence and discrimination very much normalised (400). Indeed, feminists should stand up and raise their voices (301) in a strong and powerful way because rights are easy to be lost if taken for granted (302).

In her opinion, in Moldova more than in other places (381-385), it is important to state one’s role as a feminist (351)- It is perceived as a powerful tool, almost liberatory, within which women can express their freedom and with which they can protest, since the country experiences a lot of conservative tradition coming from the Russian propaganda and from the heavy presence of religion (343-368).

In her opinion, the situation of Moldova is different from other European countries, because “we have different realities” (408). In fact, it was part of the Soviet Union regime until 1990, and only when the country gained Independence in 1991 (339) the feminist movement started to grow slowly. In addition, the country counts only 2 million people, and this is seen as a reason why the movement is growing so slowly, compared to Ukraine for example that is “much more feminist” (389). She points out that the women’s situations are different based on the context and the country; for example, she says, in Saudi Arabia or in Cambodia they will have different issues compared to the ones in Moldova (407-12). There are common struggles, but “we should find local solutions” (415).

Sometimes she says it is difficult to overcome and fight against gender stereotypes because women were raised and educated within gender norms; therefore, it is a personal struggle (433). Women and feminists are also “the product of our society” (434), but they need to recognise and fight against it in the daily life, since “the personal is political” (446). She quotes directly a second wave of feminism citation.

Concerning feminism from a historical perspective, she states that she loves to work with younger people, but she recognises the importance of working also with older feminists, even if it is more difficult (193-5). She mentions that probably now feminism is in its fourth wave, someone argues even fifth (212). She states that the previous waves cannot be judged because “150 years ago women had different problems” (215) such the negation of basic

rights. Even if there is criticism towards their ways of doing, she is grateful to the feminists who fought before (219-223).

Moreover, she states that nowadays feminism is more spread upon the international community, and women are able to connect with women living in other parts of the world, while in the past feminists focused mainly on their local realities, without being intersectional (219-228). They did not have access to all the information we can access today (286-292) that make us able to reflect upon different situations everywhere (291). Women in the past lived differently, without spaces to discuss; it was much more difficult to create a unique voice (253).

This is seen as the reason why younger women today cannot really judge; there should be thankful because those women were able to fight even with the aforementioned difficulties. She says, “we have a lot of things to learn from our mothers” (268). On the other hand, young feminists nowadays are strong and powerful, and have less resentment in calling themselves feminists. In Moldova, they are more open to understand and learn about feminism and the LGBT community. The young generation has this opportunity to come closer and join efforts (278-288).

She indeed believes that women should learn and practice solidarity between themselves, since from centuries they were divided from each other, without having space to meet, talk and discuss. Women are more used than men to live life on their own, to not create groups as a result of patriarchy and gender roles (245-254).

1979 - Moldova

The last interview has been carried out with a feminist from Moldova, part of the third wave according to the theory, born in 1979.

She considers one of the main goals of feminism to ensure the same social, sexual, political and economic rights and opportunities between men and women. In addition, women should live free from violence and any other form of discrimination (45-5;203). She is especially concerned about fighting sexual and domestic violence (65), a field in which she is personally active.

In addition, she refers to the importance of advocating for LGBT rights, since the LGBT community is victim of gender-based violence, as well as the women in prison for example (370-8). Concerning what mentioned, she points at the patriarchal system and at the massive

influence of the church inside the Moldovan society (307) as the root of the problem; hate speech against women and LGBT community comes from media politicians and religious leaders (161).

Furthermore, women should have access to the political, and all women should be aware of women's rights, therefore feminism needs to work for it (84). In her opinion, it is very important that women and feminists freely express themselves. Women should be empowered to be independent and to develop independent thoughts (95-8).

She specifically recalls the Moldovan situation, in which women politicians are not allowed to freely express their values in politics, because the system does not allow them to do. She refers to this action as amenable to the soft corruption (285) employed by the system. It is necessary to create resistance (99). She believes that ensuring the presence of women in politics should be not only a goal but also an approach to use for changing the whole system; indeed women should employ more gender-sensitive politics (73-4). It's extremely important to empower women politicians.

In addition, feminism should be the ultimate goal as a value that needs to substitute the defence of the traditional family (242). She points at this argument mainly referring to the situations in which women "are not ok" (244) inside the family; leaving the family should be the priority compared to the defence of it because valuable in its structural essence (241-9).

In her opinion, feminism and feminists should speak loudly about feminism, about women's rights and do not be afraid to declare themselves as feminists (184-6). She believes that women's organisations need to work also with the media and the private sector to distribute messages to the public about the importance of the Istanbul Convention (166-9). She also stresses the importance of talking with people adapting the language to the circumstances (198). In her opinion, when talking about feminism. It is important to always recognise the context and "take the contextual situation" (60) in consideration. In fact, she also refers to the fact that in Moldova, for example, it is not dangerous to employ the word feminist as it could be in other neighbour countries as Azerbaijan, Belarus and Transnistria (215-221).

Institutions and the traditional system try to weaken the movement creating division between feminist organisations. Indeed, they depend a lot by donors, and the way money is given, and therefore organisations are funded, creates a lot of division in the women's

movement. Moreover, because usually, donors support organisations that have an agenda similar to what are the main institutional ideas, while the grassroots movement and more little or specific organisation are left behind (110-146).

This is not perceived as a feminist approach, which women's organisation should apply instead with solidarity within each other as part of coalitions, networks, platforms (115-7). She underlines the fact that the dependence by donors which creates division is a feature typical of Moldovan society specifically, differently than from other parts of the world as in Europe or Latin America (105-8 where there is more solidarity and women understand their position inside the feminist community. It can be assumed that there is a lack of sense of belonging to the feminist community in Moldova (113).

She considers the practice of solidarity towards other women and sharing resources to create a big feminist community as one of the main important shifts to have in Moldova (277-9). The focus should be on understanding each situation and therefore the relative specific needs of each of them (256-260). It can be argued that this is a rebellious act against the system, who has always taught women's organisation to be one against the other because of funding and agendas, outcome of patriarchal values of power and privilege (302).

She shows how relevant it is for women and women's organisation to meet and discuss, to take their time to understand what is their common goal and what unifies them (358-362). They do not have proper time and space to talk and debate (356), and she says, this can create difficulties also between feminist generations, that they do not have the chance to communicate with each other (353;515-7). She says, "let's talk about tensions, let's talk about what is dividing us" (362). She specifically mentions a successful episode in which after talking about feminism in her organisation, 9-10 women from the organisation attended a march organised by LGBT organisations in Moldova, compared to the previous year when no-one showed up (455-466). In her opinion, feminism is a learning process (228), a woman cannot just say "I am a feminist, I know everything" (228). In fact, disputes and differences of thoughts should be perceived as a strength, because they allow us to think and to realise different perspectives, and moreover allow us to change our minds and evolve (232-4).

She understands young activists as being more vocal and not afraid of talking loudly about feminism (471), "they dare more" (503), are very creative and open. On the other side,

old feminists and old leaders are doing good work, and they made possible for young now to act as they are (506-8), but at the same time, they lack knowledge, energy and sometimes even passion, the fury that new generations have (511).

In general, she believes that the tensions between feminists and inside the feminist movement might be also generational, but everything is connected to the relevance of power and privileged. Old feminists can perceive negatively young women who have more power and privilege even in terms of organisation recognition at the international, national and institutional level than they have (528-533). The solution is to be found in non-competitive discussion.

5.2 Thematic analysis

At this point of the research, in order to set up an appropriate and full up discussion, the main themes and topics addressed by the participants which emerged from the narrative analysis are here listed and discussed across the different narratives. The topics are also available in a thematic table (Appendix B). The focus of the research is on the narration of each individual, whereas the themes are useful to develop a consistent discussion across the individual narrations.

Concerning the goals of feminism, a totality of six topics were mentioned by the 15 participants, namely the concepts of equality, equity, freedom, social justice and inclusion.

When it comes to the approaches to reach these goals, the main answers of the participants have been grouped into solidarity and collaboration, language and communication, internet and social media, formal and informal education, contextual awareness (including space, time, individual, from general to particular), laws and politics, dialogue and debate, intersectionality, research and data collection, marches and symbols, feminism as a critical approach and men's involvement.

In the end, four topics were detected concerning the evolution of feminism over time. Those are generational relations, feminism as dynamic, waves of feminism and mother relations.

In the next chapter, the answers of each participant are going to be discussed in relation to each other, focusing on their narrative and perception regarding the different themes. The aim is to reply to the main research question; the focus of the discussion will be on how feminists of different generation think about the goals, resources and evolution of feminism over time. The main themes will be discussed in a generational comparison, and then an argumentation will be made in relation to the waves of feminism theory.

6. DISCUSSION

When reading the analysis, it is possible to notice that there are some similarities and some differences in the narratives of each feminist. It is indeed interesting to notice how some topics were brought up by all or at least most of the participants. This applies to the claims and goals of feminism for example.

6.1 Goals

According to the feminists interviewed, the main goals of feminism are in general to achieve equality, equity, freedom, social justice, societal and cultural change and inclusion. The themes are part of different and individual narrations, therefore most of the time have been linked and associated in order to build particular narratives between the participants.

It is possible to notice that some narratives are more similar than others, while each of them has been contextualised in a very particular and personal way. Indeed, it is relevant to mention that all feminists' narrations delved into the topics and main goals bringing personal life experiences as an example. For instance, the young feminist from Spain (1994-Spain) recalled her being part of the women journalists' group in Spain to the feeling of belonging to a community in which she is able to see inequalities and discrimination. Furthermore, the Generation X feminist of UK (1972) mentioned motherhood and becoming a mother of two boys as a turning point in her life as a feminist, as well as the Baby Boomer from Iceland (1954) which recalled the moment in which she participated to a women's march for the first time. Indeed it can be argued that all these narratives are shaped on the basis of individual agency, which considers not only the actions but also the thought processes of the individual as part of

their creative way to understand and talk about the world, and in this case of the feminist social movement.

To mention some of the narratives used by participants, the focus first of all will be given to the concept of societal and cultural change; all the 15 interviewees (Appendix A) stated change of society as the main goal of feminism, meaning the dismantling of the patriarchal system with established gender norms, gender roles, gender stereotypes. These in turn create power imbalances and make society unequal and discriminatory towards women, limiting their freedom and not recognising the same value of women; therefore, not giving the same opportunities to women.

It can be argued that system change is what connects all feminists of all generations analysed in the research, who lived different period and cultivated different experiences. This means that the individual can be identified as a knowledgeable person who exercises individual agency independently and not only as of the result of the structure of society. Indeed, it seems that the singular person processes the information based on the lived experience and expectations of the future, as Giddens theory demonstrates.

As already said, some goals are shared between feminists of different generations, even though they could have a different narrative about the reason and priorities associated with it. On the other hand, these differences seem not to rely on a distribution based on generations.

As an example, the concept of equality has been mentioned by six feminists belonging to the Millennial generation (1992-Germany; 1994-Spain; 1994-Croatia; 1995-Croatia; 1987-US; 1992-Spain) and two from Generation X (1967-UK; 1979-Moldova). About the topic can be found different narratives; the young feminist from Germany related it to the topic of inclusion, therefore listening to what are the different perspectives and then having this as a starting point for the creation of a new society (1992-Germany). A similar thread can be found in the argumentation of one of the Gen-Xer feminist (1967-UK), even though the focus is mainly on equality as inclusive of the women who are at the margins of society, as opposed to a system that is based on patriarchy and dominated by males. This can be referred to as an example of goals and approaches that can overlap with each other even if coming from feminists who were born and lived different periods of time.

Furthermore, inclusion as a feminist goal has been addressed not only by the aforementioned participants but also by a Maltese feminist from 1958 and a young feminist born in Moldova in 1993. Most of them when talking about inclusion were referring to the inclusion of LBT women in the feminist movement (1992-Germany; 1958-Malta; 1995-Croatia; 1979-Moldova), showing that even if the topic is perceived as a cause of generational conflict (1992-Germany; 1995-Croatia), it is not the case in reality. In addition, the topic of trans women has been also addressed in narratives associated with freedom (1957-US; 1994-Spain; 1995-Italy), by one Baby Boomer and two Millennials. This is particularly interesting and relevant since the topic is mostly associated with the fourth wave of feminism. The topic has been either addressed positively or not addressed at all.

Equity is another concept used by participants in their narrations, meaning the access to equal opportunities in society, considering that men and women could start from a different position in life in the current society (1994-Spain; 1992-Spain; 1987-US; 1979-Moldova; 1957-US). As it is possible to notice, the theme has been mentioned by Millennials and one Gen-Xer and Baby Boomer.

Another topic that has been addressed around the perceived main goals of feminism has been found in social justice (1954-Iceland; 1992-Germany; 1958-Malta; 1957-US; 1993-Moldova). This theme has been addressed by participants belonging both to Baby Boomer and to Millennial generations.

Reading the analysis, it is evident that each narrative can follow different paths based on the individual perception, without specific data which show a clear cut between generations in the way feminists find specific feminist goals.

6.2 Approaches

When addressing the different approaches that feminism can use to achieve its goals, a diverse range of opinions emerged from the interviews. Again, it seems that the approaches are drawn into personal life experiences.

It is possible to notice from the analysis that each participant framed the reasons of why using an approach instead of another based on personal thoughts and lived experiences;

when discussing the same topics, the participants presented different opinions and logical connections about them.

The resources to be used are thought about in a creative way, and they are given relevance based on individual recognition and employment, therefore individual agency. In addition, it is likely to happen that even the same resources will be used and thought about differently by each individual. This supports the thesis by which each individual could read the same resources in a different way (Sewell, 1992), no matter the age group of reference. In fact, the individual organises the reality, the society and the life experience in its own particular way; she/he will probably associate and use some resources rather than others accounting some more valuable than others.

This is the case for example when looking specifically at the topic of social media and the internet as a resource to be used by feminists to reach feminist goals. The topic has been addressed by young feminists (1992-Germany; 1994-Spain; 1994-Croatia; 1995-Croatia; 1987-US), but also from feminists belonging to previous generations (1967-UK; 1961-Italy; 1972-UK). If one should follow the narrative of the waves of feminism theory, social media and the internet would be a feature distinctive of the fourth wave, therefore associated with the young generation of Millennials. On the contrary, the data analysed shows that this is not the case for the research participants.

In fact, the internet and social media are perceived as perfect tools and opportunities by feminist participants of Generation X and Baby Boomers (1967-UK), for the creation of international connection within feminism (1961-Italy) and as a tool that can make you feel part of the feminist community and increase the voice of women (1994-Spain; 1995-Italy; 1995-Croatia; 1987-US).

On the other hand, the internet and social media are discredited because of the phenomenon of co-optation (1992-Germany), and also because of the number of gender stereotypes that circulate and are reinforced by those platforms, as gendered beauty standards for example, as a Generation X feminist explains (1972-UK).

Therefore, it is possible to argue that social media and the internet are recognised as resources by feminists belonging to different generations, mainly Generation X and Millennials since these tools did not exist before.

Once acknowledging the resource, it is interesting to show how it is employed and thought about differently by each participant. As explained above, some view the internet and social media in a positive way for similar or different reasons, while others reject it as a tool that could help strengthen the anti-feminist discourses. The result shows that the preference or rejection cannot be associated with a specific generation; it can be argued that the tool is mentioned and recognised both positively and negatively mainly by Generation X and Millennials, even though also one participant of Baby Boomer generation clearly states her love for social media (1961-UK).

Another clear example is the topic of feminists' march and demonstrations, which according to the wave of feminism theory should be connected very much with the second wave of feminism tradition, therefore Baby Boomer generation. Accordingly, in the analysis it is possible to recognise how the participation to the Icelandic women march for political recognition was a crucial life moment for her, in which she started to belong to the feminist community, not being alone anymore with her personal struggles.

However, the same argumentation has been identified by a young Millennial feminist from Spain (1994-Spain). She explains how social media and participating in marches and demonstration made her feel part of the feminist movement, therefore causing a feeling of women's solidarity and joint action. Furthermore, almost the same narrative can be found in the observations made by both a Gen-Xer and a Millennial feminist (1961-Italy; 1995-Italy), who both mentioned the "Non una di Meno" feminist movement as an important example of feminism nowadays as a powerful group of women who with demonstrations and marches make use of effective symbolic language.

Language and communication have a great role as well. According to three Millennials (1994-Croatia; 1987-US; 1993-Moldova), one Baby Boomer (1958-Malta) and one Gen-Xer from Moldova (1979) it is important nowadays that feminists name themselves as such. They should give a name to societal norms and situations in which discrimination against women is present. As one of them (1958-Malta) described well, it is indeed impossible to fight and subvert something that has no name.

It is interesting to notice how language and communication were framed differently by the feminists who mentioned it. In fact, some of them included the importance of speaking out

loud, using symbols and slogans about feminism and feminists as powerful characteristic of women's marches and demonstrations (1995-Italy; 1961-Italy; 1994-Spain), while on the other hand some of them (1992-Germany; 1992-Spain) rejected the power of symbols and slogans since it seems to them that this trend risks to become a fashion more than a real commitment. It is very interesting to notice how two Millennials (1994-Spain; 1992-Germany) actually points at two completely different narratives about it. In fact, one believed (1994-Spain) that even when because of fashion it is still an achievement if a person outside the movement buys a particular T-shirt with a feminist slogan on it; on the contrary, the second Millennial (1992-Germany) considered this practice as counterproductive, indeed co-opting feminism and its goals and symbols in a capitalist society. This can be perceived as a relevant data in showing that living the same period of time, does not automatically mean that same approaches are considered valuable and effective; even between feminists of almost the same age.

To further discuss the importance of language and communication from another point of view, the topic has been connected with the importance for countries and governments to have good laws, which consider women's rights and demands. Laws, political representation and formal institutions are perceived as the place where the real change can happen (1987-US; 1954-Iceland; 1957-US) since appropriate terminology is seen as a form of pressure for achieving institutional change. Instead, feminists who were more inclined to support the power of the grassroots movements, talked about laws and institutions as a good tool but surely not enough on its own (1993-Moldova; 1961-Italy; 1995-Italy;). In their opinion, laws and women in decision-making positions alone are not decisive to change society.

For research purposes, it is provocative to observe how, about this topic, generations are not only mixed in terms of who supports what, showing again that there is no real generational cut-off, but also how certain actions and behaviour which are associated by the theory of the waves of feminism with one generation are instead rejected by the same one. Moreover, it seems that sometimes they are supported and used by feminists from a different generation, who, always according to the theory, should be more prone to not use them.

This argumentation is clearer when it comes to the controversial topic of men's involvement in the feminist movement. As the analysis shows, the topic has been addressed directly by a Baby Boomer from the US (1957-US) and Gen-Xers from UK (1967-UK; 1972-UK). It is surprisingly interesting that the topic was mentioned directly by none of the Millennials,

even though this does not show that the topic has not been addressed in a more indirect way. In fact, men's involvement is one of the corollaries of the change of narrative between the fourth generation of Millennials and the previous ones. The data presented show indeed that this is not the case in the reality analysed.

However, this does not show that Millennials did not consider the topic in the whole interview process. Instead, they framed it associating it with the importance of formal and informal education.

Education perceived as a relevant and powerful tool to produce changes towards feminism goals in society, mainly changing the societal and cultural structure with gender roles and stereotypes, has been mentioned by ten participants, five Millennials (1992-Germany; 1994 Spain; 1995-Croatia; 1992-Spain; 1993-Moldova), and five between Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers (1954-Iceland; 1967-UK; 1961-Italy; 1972-UK; 1979-Moldova). The main thread regarding the employment of education refers to the need of it starting from a very young age, but not only concerning schools. In fact, they refer to education as a way to produce renewed societal norms that aim to shift the actual gendered norms inside society and prevent therefore discrimination. A Gen-Xer (1972-UK) refers to toxic masculinity in her narrative as well.

A metaphor used by a feminist interviewed (1967-UK) is very suitable to explain how education should be used as a tool to reach feminists' goals. Education should be a double-edged sword (1967-UK), in which women are taught about how to defend themselves and react to the gendered society in which we live in, and on the other hand, it should be used as well in an empowering way, therefore providing women with the dignity to act, call, and obtain their demands to live in a society free from gender stereotypes, and therefore from gender roles and expected gender performances. This narrative has also been employed by Millennial feminists (1995-Croatia).

However, it is important to notice how a Baby Boomer interviewed (1954-Iceland) believed that education should be given to girls and boys differently, because she believes males should acknowledge that they, as a gendered group, represents in large part the perpetrators when it comes to gender discrimination. In this case, she talks about the importance to show the actual evidence of the world we live in with data and information.

On the other hand, data collection and research are seen as another tool that feminists can employ in order to achieve their goals. This strategy has been mentioned by three Millennials and one Gen-Xer who are currently employing this approach as academics and researchers (1987-US; 1992-Spain; 1995-Croatia; 1967-UK). In their opinion, data collection and research can be used to strengthen the actual evidence of societal discrimination (1987-US), but also because these materials will serve feminism as a movement itself and its ongoing process of self-learning and re-evaluation.

In fact, feminism is perceived by most interviewees as a critical approach itself, therefore as a way to see the world. Some of the feminists interviewed refer to feminism using the metaphor of a gender lens or feminist glasses, which once put on by a person, it is impossible to take off again (1954-Iceland; 1994-Croatia; 1957-US). Eventually, feminism is perceived as a critical strategy, is therefore not only a goal or a movement, but mainly an approach (1994-Croatia). Other feminist highlighted the importance to use feminism as a value against patriarchal society itself, as clearly stated by a Gen-Xer from Moldova (1979).

Again, it is possible to recognise how the idea of feminism is a critical approach to reality is supported by feminists of different generations, who had diverse experiences in life and adopted feminism as a critical way to approach reality in different ways. Some of them mentioned that since feminism is connected to everything, therefore one can cultivate personal interests and delve into them using a feminist perspective (1992-Germany; 1994-Croatia; 1995-Italy) or applying feminism trying to use different personal perspectives (1961-Italy; 1957-US) as for example employing it differently in distinct stages in one's life (1958-Malta; 1972-UK).

Moreover, one should always be open to learn and listen about different feminisms, and in this understanding, intersectionality can be mentioned as one of the main important approaches that feminism should employ to reach its goals. As the table (Appendix B) shows, eight feminists from very different generations pointed at the awareness of intersectional inequalities and identities as one of the main methods that feminism shall adopt. Indeed, feminism is perceived as being a very big and broad movement, which include different goals and perspectives depending on contextual situations.

The context has a central role in how feminists should approach not only specific goals but mainly each other. As the table show (Appendix B), eleven feminists expressed the importance of employing a contextual perspective on goals, approaches and even singular individuals. Context has been framed in regard to geographical space (1992-Germany; 1994-Spain; 1995-Italy; 1958-Malta; 1957-US; 1978-US; 1992-Spain; 1993-Moldova; 1979-Moldova), to time (1958-Malta; 1993-Moldova) and interestingly also on the context of the individual, therefore unifying space, time and the individual agency (1995-Italy; 1987-US)

It is very curious to highlights how also time and space related to each other in some of the interviewees' speeches (1958-Malta; 1993-Moldova; 1994-Spain; 1992-Spain; 1979-Moldova), since different geographical spaces can live contemporarily in what are seen as two different time zones. As an example, Icelandic women obtained the right to vote almost hundred years before Switzerland (1954-Iceland; 1958-Malta) in which women's right to vote was recognised only in 1960. This shows how the concept of time and space are really important and are considered by feminists as one of the crucial points of the whole movement. Indeed, it is not the same everywhere, and it cannot be, because feminism itself lives in different places and in different time zones, at the same time.

Based on this argumentation, as example, Millennial feminists (1992-Germany; 1993-Moldova) reported the importance of adopting an approach of no-judgment between feminisms and feminists, because the individual and the contextual situation has to be taken very much in consideration.

As opposed to judgment, which it can be argued it motivates division and competition, almost all feminists interviewed (Appendix B) mention solidarity as one of the approaches that feminists should use inside the movement. Indeed the topic has been mainly associated with the importance of creating debate and dialogue inside the movement, in order to fully listen to each other, to create collaboration and solidarity, to understand the contextual needs of every woman in the feminist movement and overcome the division in order for the common main goal.

Indeed, all of them despite one (1995-Croatia) perceive debates and dialogue among feminists as one of the strengths of the movement, instead of a weakness. This shows how rich is the movement, and how even dialogue and debates can be put out from a capitalist and

liberal approach of individualism and competition. Feminism, as able to always re-evaluate itself (1994-Croatia), is then able to use dialogues and debates to build a stronger community, in which the collective collaboration seems to be the ultimate goal. Further, a Millennial and a Gen-Xer from Moldova (1993;1979) openly argue that historically women have been divided and did not have spaces to talk and debate, therefore women were not able to create such solidarity between each other, pushed by patriarchy to stay divided and be in competition one with the other.

It can be argued that solidarity and support are perceived as a way to collaborate with each other, using different tools than the ones society is used to, embedded with competition and division. This last argumentation is found in the narrative of the Millennial from Croatia (1994), the Baby Boomer from the US (1957) and the Gen-Xer from Moldova (1979); collaboration, support and solidarity as challenging the normalised approaches of individualism and conflict present in society, to create and feel part of the feminist community.

In conclusion, it can be discussed that even when it comes to the approaches, the diversity of opinions is wide. Interestingly, even when mentioning the same approaches, most of the time they have been described differently, this not be dependant on generational belonging, and showing instead the singular creative agency of the individual, not only in choosing a resource more than another but also in the way these ones are employed.

6.3 Time

The last important aspect of the research discussion is associated with the conceptualisation of feminism over time. When looking at the table of themes found in the analysis (Appendix B), it is immediately visible that feminism is perceived as dynamic by most of the feminists interviewed, without a specific generational belonging.

This information is extremely relevant in association with time, since it shows the communal understanding of feminism as something that can change, and it actually does change. Furthermore, this change is perceived by most (e.g. 1994-Croatia; 1992-Spain; 1961 Italy; 1967-UK) as a positive characteristic of feminism itself, only a Baby Boomer from Iceland see the change is feminism, but she is reluctant to frame it completely positive (1954- Iceland); change inside feminism is not solely associated with time, but with time in relation to space

while considering the contextual a person is living (e.g. 1957-US; 1987-US; 1993-Moldova; 1979-Moldova). In fact, it is arguable that two places can have a different “feminist time” at the same chronological time.

Feminism is diverse so that there are many feminisms as there are different places (1992-Germany; 1994-Spain; 1958-Moldova; 1961-Italy; 1993-Moldova; 1979-Moldova) and/or different people (1995-Italy; 1961-Italy; 1972-US). In fact, for instance an interviewee (1987-US) identified herself as belonging to the older generation of feminists when comparing herself with younger feminists who seem more outspoken, according to her; on the other hand, she felt part of the new generation if comparing herself with older feminists, therefore stating that the context is individual.

In addition, it seems that feminism does not change for oneself only when comparing within others in order to identify and find a position for ourselves, but also it changes in different stages of life, meaning that being young, going to be retired, becoming a mother for instance are all examples of life’s situations that can change the way one perceive, adapt and adopt feminism (1972-UK; 1958-Malta). Not only life situations, but also the access to the around the subject shapes and modify the attitude and understanding of feminism towards one’s life, as a Millennial feminist (1992-Spain) well explains during her interview.

Undoubtedly, feminism seems to be recognised as an ongoing process which happens both externally and internally to the individual.

Further, some of the interviewees openly recognised how feminism had accomplished several achievements over time (1994-Croatia; 1958-Malta; 1957-US; 1972-UK; 1995-Croatia; 1993-Moldova). Millennials stated that feminists nowadays should be grateful for the feminists who fought before them, while acknowledging and being aware of them as their roots, and Baby Boomers and Gen-Xers recognised the great work and qualities of the young people nowadays. As mentioned above, it is believed that feminists should engage more in discussions between each other, and then between generations.

Nevertheless, feminism has been also described as being different in goals or approaches, or both, because of generational belonging, as mentioned in the narration by a Baby Boomer feminist (1954-Iceland), Millennial feminists (1992-Germany; 1994-Spain; 1995-Croatia; 1992-Spain; 1993-Moldova) and Gen-Xers (1967-UK; 1972-UK; 1979-Moldova). It is

extremely relevant to mention a case reported by a Baby Boomer feminist (1957-US) and a Millennial feminist (1992-Germany) who refers to Alice Schwarzer, a feminist linked to the second wave, who, as reported in the analysis, it seems she has been rejected by young feminists. It is particularly interesting how these two feminists framed the narrative differently around the topic, the older feminist employing a focus on the dialogue that should be between different generations, and the second one supporting the rejection and using it to frame one of the differences between feminists' generations when it comes to its goals. (cfr. Analysis 1992-Germany). This case could be used as clear evidence for the lack of communication that persists between feminists nowadays since the same topic is approached from different perspectives that should be talked and listened about. Indeed, a situation like the one mentioned here could create a simple understanding of the phenomenon in which the disagreement gets more attention, without considering the different starting point of the two feminists, in this specific case. Furthermore, it can be assumed that one could not see the argumentation of the other one, until they do share their different opinions about it.

It is relevant to notice how most of the feminists interviewed, when describing generational differences, brought as examples people with whom they are frequently interacting. Importantly, as the thematic table shows (Appendix B), the majority of the interviewees mentioned their mothers, grandmothers, daughters and sisters in the conversations, and all of them made use of diverse narratives. Some employed the concept of motherhood/sisterhood to show how feminism has helped to change society, showing how mothers and grandmothers were living before compared to us now, others to state different opinions inside their own families generations, and most of them to identify their own position in accordance or rejection with the ones of their mothers, grandmothers, daughters and sisters.

It can be argued again that people understand society and have a conceptualisation of time based on their personal individual experience, and that the women interviewed did perceive themselves as part of a community, in which all women, no matter if openly feminists or not, were included. One might argue that it seems women support women inside their family first. It might be argued that this connects with the standpoint presented in the analysis (1979-Moldova) by which historically, women did not have spaces to meet and talk, share opinions, create a community. Therefore, this community has started inside the house. However, mothers, grandmothers, daughters and sister were not the only women mentioned,

also colleagues, students, other feminists, women, and women associations this showing that nowadays women have more space and within solidarity and dialogue, as discussed above, they should challenge society which took from them the opportunity to build a solidal community.

On the other hand, when talking about generational relations broadly, meaning without specifically referring to events happening in their own life, the waves of feminism theory has been mentioned mainly by Millennials. Differently, as mentioned above, Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers report generational relations without framing them with the wave metaphor.

The wave metaphor has been used to describe again differences of feminism in relation to time-space, as reported by a Millennial feminist (1993-Spain) who expressed the possible existence of different waves' stages in different countries. This thesis has been supported openly by another Millennial feminist of Moldova (1993).

When mentioned, the metaphor has been recognised as a useful tool to describe and identify feminism's evolution over time (1995-Italy; 1987-US), even if it is perceived as being misleading from the actual historical process of continuity and change that is embedded in feminism itself (1994-Croatia; 1995-Italy; 1987-US). Interestingly, the same feminists who mentioned the theory as being useful, then argued that they do not fully support the narrative embedded in it. It can be discussed that the waves of feminism theory is itself recognised as a resource to use, by which is it possible to explain and contextualise feminism historically, but one should be aware of the complexity of the movement which is not addressed by the metaphor and theory proposed.

It seems true that the biggest generational difference amenable to the presented data is surely connected with the participant's indication of the waves of feminism existence. It appears (Appendix B) that even if framed using diverse narratives as presented above, the wave metaphor has been solely employed by Millennials.

7. CONCLUSION

It is certainly clear at this point in the research that context plays a huge role in the definition of social movements. In the specific case of the feminist social movement, it is arguable that context has a huge impact on the agency of feminists.

Moreover, this research shows how context is not only related to society, therefore it is not only the experience of society who shape human's understanding and adoption of tools, approaches and goals; context also indicates the micro-environments in which feminists live and experience life, which shape the ways agency is employed creatively.

When considering the feminist movement and its evolution over time, it can be argued that the waves of feminism theorization does not reflect the empiric reality, employing simple categorisations to describe a very much more complex phenomenon, such as feminism.

It can be argued that the wave metaphor and its conceptualisation potentially damage the social movement both from inside and outside. Employing the metaphor of waves embedded in its narrative of feminists as separated from each other because of time reinforces a mindset and perception of the difficulty of dialogue between generations of feminists, with internal divisions that cannot be overcome *a priori*. The theorization seems not to help a positive engagement between people and feminists, one could argue, setting time boundaries that can slow the process of solidarity and community creation inside the movement over time, one could argue affecting the achievements of its goals. In addition, it can be assumed that the negative narrative of division of the waves of feminism theorization discredits the power and the effectiveness of the movement when addressing the general society.

In fact, as discussed and analysed, feminists indeed perceive generational differences inside the movement, which prevent dialogue, understanding and support between them. As the research data show, on the contrary, often feminists were using the same narratives even if belonging to different generations, having diverse backgrounds and coming from or living in different countries; it can be argued that there are more points of connection and accord between feminist generations than the actual generations seems to be aware of.

The discussion of the data shows a perceived lack of communication, dialogue and understanding between different generations of feminists. It can be here mentioned Carol Bacchi's approach *What is the problem represented to be?* to claim that the participants' observations on the importance of solidarity and collaboration show a perceived problematic lack of it inside the movement. Feminists should engage in dialogues and listen to each other more, regardless of generational belonging. This is supported by the participants itself; feminism is an ongoing learning process, and feminists should acknowledge that. Moreover, as

the data show, being part of a specific generational group, or having lived in a specific time does not shape *a priori* people's opinion. This argumentation lacks context consideration reliant on time and space, and it lacks micro-context considerations. Further, it does not consider people's agency accountable.

As mentioned at the beginning of the research, some authors have tried to challenge the wave metaphor and provide a different conceptualisation of the feminism's narrative and evolution over time, mainly focusing on the relationship between each wave and the overall structure. As accountable examples, Chamberlain (2017) proposed the reframe of waves of feminism theory as affective temporalities, in which the focus is on the time present and not on the generational belonging, as Hewitt (2012) proposed a conceptualisation of waves as coexisting in time and space as radio-waves.

The present research considers beneficial these reconceptualization of the theory from a macro-perspective, but it claims to show instead how feminism is connected also with the micro-individual context and agency.

It is here supported the thesis by which every individual, as feminist, can represent her own particular wave as unique, specific and understandable in her context made of space and time. Every feminist is an affective temporality. It is supported that there is a pluralism of waves inside the ocean of feminism. Furthermore, to support this understanding it is relevant to remind, as mentioned more and more times inside the research, that each wave has been self-declared by an individual feminist.

To conclude, it is believed that the waves of feminism theorization offers a too static description of what instead is dynamic by its nature. It is here presented an alternative metaphor and narrative that seems more suitable to describe feminism and its micro-contextual evolution.

Feminism as a whole is imagined as being more similar to different water streams which can surge new, mix, encounter, divide, change direction, intensity, temperature and extent. Importantly, water streams coexist in their diversity and do not prevent each other. They are dynamic and better express the idea of interminable transformation. Moreover, they can provide the "route" to individual and specific feminist water waves, which flow and float freely emerging and re-emerging continuously between different water streams. They are

interdependent to each other; water streams are solely one of the causes of water wave formation, and surely water waves contribute to the formation and transformation of water streams over time.

8. LIMITATIONS

The present research is limited to an analysis with a focus on white women active in the feminist movement, mainly from an institutionalised perspective. The criteria considered has been found in the age group selection, but in the end a great part of the participants is recognised as coming from western world countries. Geography did not want to be a criterion; feminists of Eastern European countries were contacted unfortunately without success.

In addition, it is arguable that most of the women interviewed belong to middle and/or high-class society, due to their work experiences and educational background. This is relevant since it shows that the research covers a specific targeted group of women, in which not poor, uneducated and migrant women were interviewed. This limitation, however, offers a starting point for conducting similar studies, which could take into consideration feminists with a different social, cultural and economic background. In this case, it would be possible to compare the different data and increase the analysis and research on the evolution of feminism from a micro-understanding.

It is assumed that since I am a feminist myself, this could have affected some feminists to freely express their opinions and ideas. Due to this situation, it has been challenging to design a smooth conversation with the feminists interviewed, while not affecting their stories with my personal ideas. Sometimes, some of the participants indeed wanted to know my personal opinions. Inside the feminist movement, there are different standpoints positions and internal controversies, and I assume that some interviewees felt that I could potentially disagree with them and therefore they might have been more hesitant to express themselves.

Regarding data collection, the snowball sampling gave few results; it has been effective only with participants who did not want to participate themselves. As a result, the respondents' ages are not balanced; 9 respondents belong to Generation Y/Millennials, 4 respondents to Baby Boomers generation and only 3 respondents to Generation X. This could create an

imbalance from one side, regarding the numbers of participants for comparison, but it can be argued that it might give a broader understanding of the data focusing on the individual opinions more than on the generational belonging.

The interviews have been conducted online and some technical problems occurred while carrying out the interviews. This might have affected the outcomes of the interviews and transcriptions. In addition, the interviews were conducted in English being not the mother tongue of most of the participants and of the interviewer, sometimes making more challenging the understanding of words and sentences used.

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