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Womanist and Feminist Pedagogy: Infusing the Wisdom of Women into Online Education

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History of the Theories

Womanism and feminism both began out of a desire for equity and better treatment in society for people other than those who are male-identified. Over time, the ideologies shifted and created new and deeper spaces for women. As women began to argue for the right to education as early as the 1670s, other rights were soon demanded from voting rights to equal pay and more (Freedman, 2007). Thus, feminism became a vehicle for women to garner equal footing in a society that favored men. In this chapter, we aim to outline a brief history of key feminisms and womanisms including modern feminism, cyborg-feminism, Cyberfeminism, technofeminism, Black feminism, womanism, and technowomanism.

Modern Feminism

First-wave modern feminism began in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention in New York state. The unifying goals of this movement were women's suffrage and abolition (Davidson, 2017). The people of the first wave, like all waves, were many and in the initial wave key players

included Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Simone de Beauvoir (see Figure 5.1).

In the mid-1960s, the focus of feminism shifted toward Feminist scholarship, various legal reforms, and grassroots organizing which together changed how society understood the “roles, rights, and status” of women (Lefevre, 2017). Issues arose, however, as Black Feminists and Feminists of color felt that the movement was not a safe space to bring their full selves to and be recognized and valued. Integral figures during this period include freelance journalist Gloria Steinem, author Betty Freidan, and Black Feminists such as author and civil rights lawyer Florynce Kennedy, Cellestine Ware, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Patricia Robinson.

The third wave, which began in the mid-1990s, emphasized empowerment and making space for more voices. It was during the crest of this wave that the Internet broke into the mainstream and became fertile ground for deeper exploration of feminism and technology writ large. Rebecca Walker, the writer, activist, and daughter of Alice Walker, introduced the term Third Wave in her 1992 *Ms.* magazine article entitled “Becoming the Third Wave.” Other third-wave Feminists included fellow Generation X-ers Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, authors of *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (2000).

The fourth wave of feminism emerged rooted in the digital space and is characterized by engagement with social media and call-out culture. People like Anita Sarkeesian embodied the latest mission of feminism equipped with the tools of communicative technology. She utilized YouTube video essays as a platform for addressing misogyny and other similar shortcomings found in video games.

With each wave, time, culture, society, and more shifted the focus and agenda of feminism. Building and growing upon the thoughts and actions of the people before them, each wave evolved to meet the needs and injustices against women at that time. There were also movements alongside and concurrent within feminism that were divergent enough to warrant their own distinctions. In the next section, we will focus on various feminisms influenced by technology.

Cyborg-, Cyber-, and Technofeminism

Cyborg-feminism was created by professor and scholar Donna Haraway in 1985 as an exploration of women’s antinuclear activism during

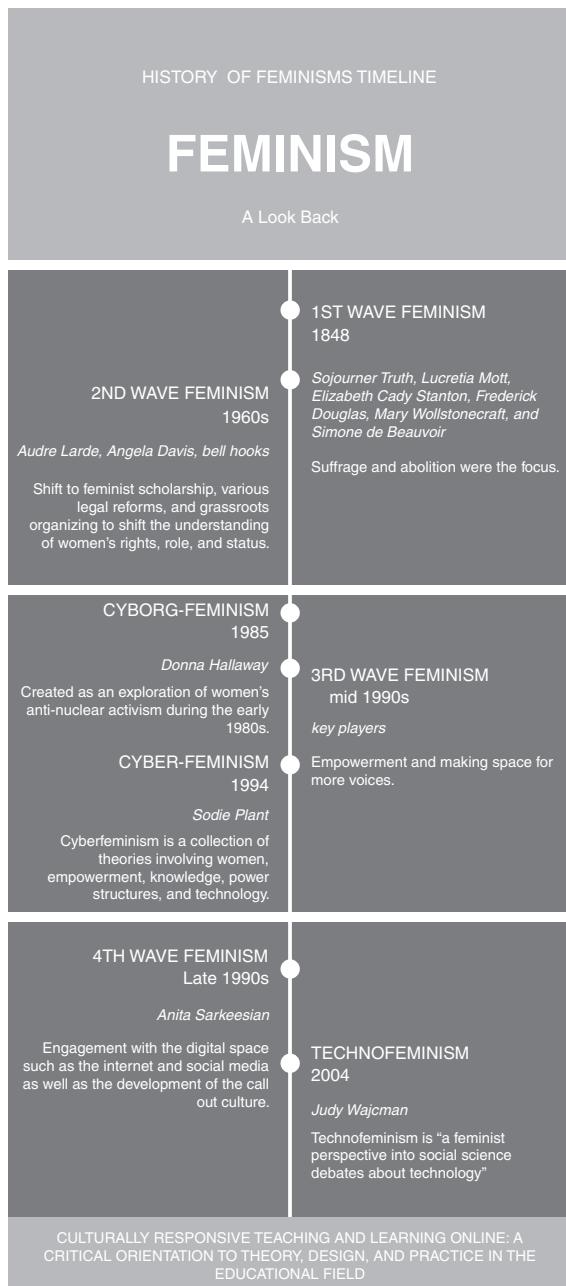


Figure 5.1 History of Feminism Timeline.

the early 1980s. Inspired by this as well as the advent of the Internet, Cyberfeminism is “the work of Feminists interested in theorizing, critiquing, and exploiting the Internet, cyberspace, and new-media technologies in general” and though understood as a pluralism of theories was coined as a term in 1994 by British philosopher Sadie Plant (Consalvo, 2003, p. 109).

The scholarship around Cyberfeminism includes theories

that women are naturally suited to using the internet, as both share important commonalities; women can best empower themselves by becoming fluent in online communication and acquiring technological expertise; and women would do best to study how power and knowledge are constructed in technological systems, and how and where feminists can disrupt and change these practices for the betterment of all members of society.

(Consalvo, 2003, p. 110)

The key players included academics Cynthia Cockburn who researched and photographed gender, labor, and peace-making, Susan Luckman who is an interdisciplinary cultural studies scholar, and researcher and producer of multimedia art Anna Munster (“Cynthia Cockburn,” 2014). Similar to second-wave feminism, Cyberfeminism is critiqued as being focused on the middle class, often white women who insist “all girls need modems” but do not take into consideration the reality of the digital divide for many around the world.

Emerging parallel to fourth-wave feminism is an offshoot of feminism known as technofeminism. Judy Wacjman first wrote about feminism and technology in her 1991 seminal text *Feminism Confronts Technology*. Thirteen years later, she followed up with the book *Technofeminism*. It is within this collection of essays that Wacjman outlines technofeminism as “a feminist perspective into social science debates about technology” and engages with “information, communication, and biomedicine” throughout the course of the text (Wajcman, 2004, vi). Wacjman’s critical analysis and framework provided Feminist thought with a perspective cogently aligned and relevant to emerging conversations and concerns around technology.

With the rich history of feminism and its related concepts, there is a throughline of criticism that the voices centered and experiences overlooked fall along racialized color lines. White women and their

concerns overshadow those of Black women and other women of color. In the next sections, we turn our attention to Black women-centric movements and their histories.

Black Feminism

From the time of slavery, Black women like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman spoke out about the contradiction of societal norms in the United States that result in injustices for themselves and others. From its inception, however, modern feminism was centered around the voices, experiences, and needs of white women. Non-white women who attempted to participate in the Feminist movement found themselves marginalized due to racism. During second-wave feminism and the civil rights movement, the intersectional needs of Black women and women of color were increasingly being devalued in both spaces. Black women were denied leadership roles and equal voice on the two fronts, so a more inclusive and centering mobilization was born in Black feminism.

Writers, activists, and scholars rose up to contribute to and craft Black Feminist thought such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Patricia Hill Collins, and more. The central focus of which is viewing Black women's lives, struggles, perspectives, and liberation as valid and crucial for everyone to acknowledge and learn. Recognizing the valuable and unique perspective of Black women on society and its shortcomings, Black feminism fueled the development of many groups and organizations led by Black women and women of color while motivated by a myriad of causes such as LGBTQIA liberation, Black nationalism, sexual violence, media representation, and so forth.

Womanism

Writer Alice Walker first introduced the world to the concept of a Womanist in 1979 during her remarks in a short story entitled, "Coming Apart." In 1983 within the preface to her publication *In Search of our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose*, Walker defined the term Womanist. Over the course of four parts, the vision of a Womanist was shaped. The definition begins by establishing a Womanist as "a black feminist or feminist of color" and it ends by stating that "womanist is to feminist as

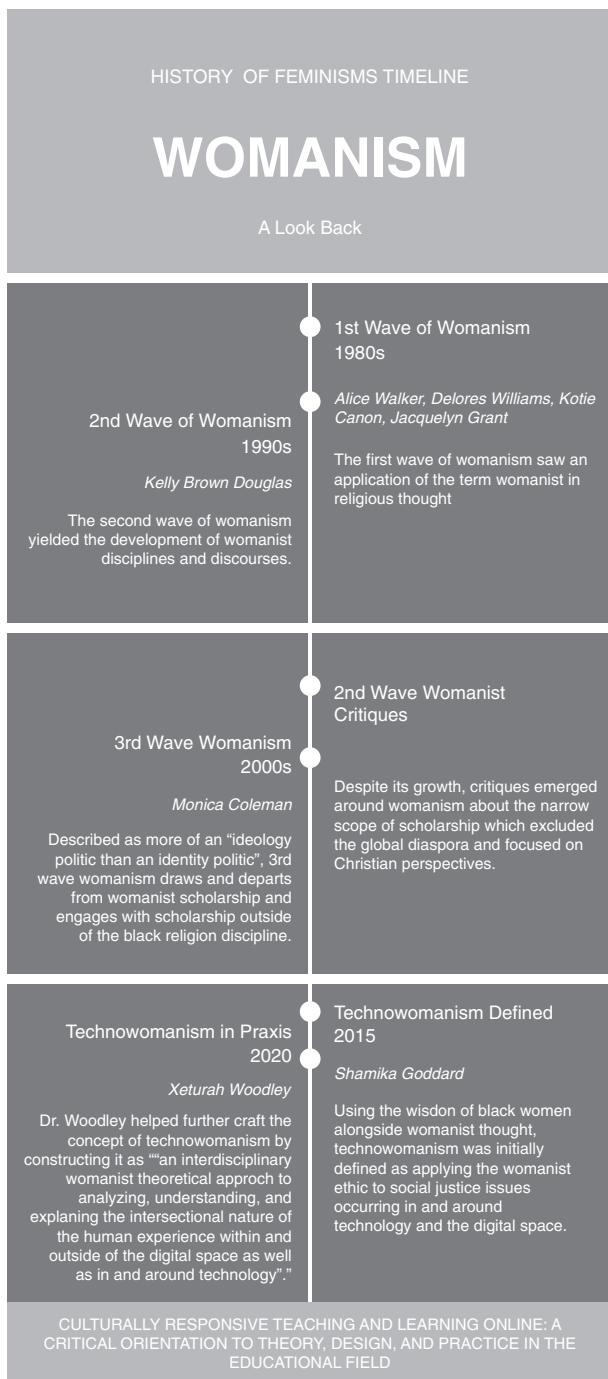
purple is to lavender" (Walker, 1983, p. xii). The two midsections of the definition cover who and what a Womanist loves as well as confirms that a Womanist is "[c]ommitted to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female" and "[n]ot a separatist, except for health" (Walker, 1983, p. xii). It is from this definition that scholars began to craft Womanist theology, ethics, and thought.

Similar to feminism, womanism has experienced distinct epochs (see Figure 5.2). Womanist theologian Monica Coleman walks readers through each wave of womanism in her text *Ain't I a Womanist, Too*. The first wave of womanism was an application of the term Womanist in religious thought and the key players include Delores Williams (*Sisters in the Wilderness*), Katie Cannon (*Black Womanist Ethics*), and Jacquelyn Grant (*Perspectives on Womanist Theology*). The second wave of womanism saw a "development of its respective disciplines and its establishment of normative womanist discourse" and "delve[d] deeper into theological reflection based on Black women's experiences" while key players include Kelly Brown Douglas (*Sexuality and the Black Church*). Just as the second wave of feminism saw an increase in criticisms, so did the second wave of womanism. The second wave of womanism is also described as "largely Christian, heteronormative, and detached from local and global political movements" (Coleman, 2013, pp. 14–16). Coleman describes the third wave of womanism as "challenges the identity politics of the second wave" and "it is more of an ideology politic than an identity politic" (Coleman, 2013, pp. 17–19). She further expounds on the third wave of womanism by highlighting that this particular manifestation of womanism:

1. Engages the religious lives of women of African Descent;
2. Maintains a goal of justice, survival, freedom, liberation, and/or quality of life;
3. Understands itself to both draw upon *and also depart from* a tradition of womanist religious scholarship; and
4. Engages work and thinkers both inside and outside of black religious scholarship.

(Coleman, 2013, p. 19)

By opening up the ideology of womanism outside of Black Feminists and Feminists of color, Coleman introduced the possibility that wholeness through Womanist critique is available to all.



Technowomanism

Just as feminism was affected greatly by the advent of the Internet as well as other consumer technologies, womanism experienced similar treatment. I developed technowomanism initially while studying at Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York and later collaborated with Dr. Xeturah Woodley of New Mexico State University. As the story goes, in 2013 while taking Systematic Theology 103, an introductory course taught by the late Dr. James Cone, the father of Black liberation theology, I learned about liberalism, neoliberalism, feminism, womanism, mujerista theology, Asian, African, Native-American, and Eco-liberation theologies. As we learned about key thinkers in each genre, we were told by Dr. Cone that we each had our own liberation theology and to find and explore it.

It was out of that charge that I first wrote about and introduced technowomanism in the thesis for my Master of Divinity. Instead of just writing a paper, I did a paper and a project—a series of YouTube videos that accompanied the paper. In addition to technowomanism, I wrote about two case studies (the Black Lives Matter movement and Gamergate) as well as another original and nascent concept called the Uncanny Valley of Humanity which explains how marginalized people are at times subjugated and relegated to an “uncanny valley” when they exhibit characteristics of a straight, white, cis-gendered, heterosexual man causing discomfort for those who identify differently than the marginalized person (Goddard, 2015). I went on to make three more YouTube videos specifically about womanism and technowomanism. The definition of technowomanism has evolved from, “the application of the womanist ethic as a framework for analyzing social justice issues that occur in and around the digital space and consumer technologies” to “an interdisciplinary womanist theoretical approach to analyzing, understanding, and explaining the intersectional nature of the human experience within and outside of the digital space as well as in and around technology” (Goddard & Woodley, 2019, p. 659). Equipped with this more robust definition, technowomanism is poised to be a framework through which scholars and activists can engage with our connected world using the wisdom of womanism.

Now that we briefly introduced the histories and contributions of the assorted feminisms and womanisms, we can move toward how these perspectives impact and influence education. First, we explore

the traditional learning environment and feminisms before expanding to contemporary online and remote learning and how feminisms and womanisms may inform deeper and more meaningful educational experiences.

Applications in Research in Traditional Learning

Historic Look at Gynocentric Course Design

Gynocentric course design is steeped in Feminist pedagogy. Carolyn Shrewsbury's 1993 article entitled, "What is Feminist Pedagogy" is distilled into a definition of Feminist pedagogy as "a collection of classroom practices, relational approaches, and educational strategies informed by feminist theories" (Paludi, 2014). Feminist pedagogy was forged in the halls of higher education as women's studies burgeoned. During the second wave of feminism, several actions sparked the development of women's studies. *The Second Sex* written first in French in 1949 and then published in English in 1953 by the aforementioned Simone de Beauvoir is considered "one of the first academic books to address the gender obstacles of women in similar professions as men" (Zhou, 2017). Feminist activists began demanding higher institutions of women's studies courses and departments during the 1960s. In 1969, Cornell University taught its first accredited women's studies course in the United States, and in 1970, then San Diego State College now San Diego State University "established the first women's studies program after a year of student organizing, social advocacy, and petitioning" (Zhou, 2017). During the rest of the 1970s, extra-collegiate entities were established to further support women's studies programs.

The *Feminist Studies* journal started in 1972 as "the first scholarly journal in the field of women's studies" and the National Women's Studies Association began in 1977 "to advocate for new theories and concerns brought by the Feminist movement as well as by an increase in scholarly interest in research about women and gender" (Zhou, 2017). It was not until 1990 that the next big achievement in women's studies was accomplished. Emory University has the honor of founding the first PhD program in women's studies (Zhou, 2017). Since then, great strides have been made in women's studies doctoral programs in the United States as well as with regard to the number of peer-reviewed academic journals

around the world. By 2016, there were 20 institutions that had established women's studies doctoral programs in the United States and across the globe 41 peer-reviewed academic journals (Zhou, 2017). Garnering such strides, feminism's overall trajectory in education has been impactful for countless educators and learners. With a grasp of the historical and big picture moments, we can now focus on how feminism particularly influences learning environments first for offline classrooms and then for hybrid and online settings.

Feminist and Womanist Ways of Teaching in Traditional Classrooms

When it comes to Feminist ways of teaching in traditional classrooms, there have been a few ways leading Feminist educators have recommended achieving this aim. Journal author Barbara Allen (1984) wrote in *Feminist Teacher* several articles that shed light on incorporating feminism into classrooms beyond dropping the topic as-is into a syllabus. In the inaugural edition of *Feminist Teacher*, Barbara Allen introduces her series on incorporating Feminist thought into college classroom curriculums. She describes the difficulty some teachers may have figuring out how to incorporate Feminist thought into a curriculum that seems set or in disciplines that do not appear at first blush to lend themselves to Feminist pedagogy such as statistics or a language class. Allen offered the optimistic view that for some students, their "... information levels are raised simply because they have been shown that women humanists, philosophers, theorists and scientists exist" and all of the various tactics she presents ultimately "... contributes to a student's education and also helps to expand the recognized list of experts who have shaped our intellectual, cultural and scientific history" (Allen, 1984, p. 29). Allen offers two main strategies which include "...to use the analysis of such topics as the situation of women, the status of women and the political participation of women as examples for explaining the concepts covered in the course" and

[i]n other instances you may be able to give the example of a woman analyzing a situation and giving a different account for the phenomena she observes than the men of her time, or to present a feminist writer's view of a specific facet of your discipline.

(Allen, 1984, p. 29)

By finding ways to implement these changes in various college classrooms, millions of students will be exposed to Feminist thought in a way that will broaden their intellectual horizons.

Rebecca S. Richards (2011), a Feminist teacher who figured out how to incorporate Cyberfeminism into her digital/technological classroom which we will return to shortly speaks clearly as well about the tenets of Feminist pedagogy. Richards provides real-world examples of Feminist pedagogy in the classroom. She writes, “I ask for personal ‘check-ins’ with my students, encourage non-dyadic conversation patterns, and take time to acknowledge bodies in the classroom before engaging our topic for the day” (Richards, 2011, p. 5). In addition to these examples, Richards teases out the concepts within Feminist pedagogy such as ethics of care, bell hooks’ thoughts on Feminist pedagogy, and service-learning and its pitfalls.

Richards points out that “Ethics of care, usually attributed to Carol Gilligan’s 1982 work on gender and psychological development, is one of the most cited praxes in relation to feminist teaching” and goes on to define a Feminist teacher employing ethics of care as “[seeing] the classroom as a nexus of human relationships that cannot be manifestly managed through law and logic but rather through empathy and compassion” (Richards, 2011, p. 8). However, there are critiques of Gilligan’s ethics of care. Namely, that by implementing such a construct in the classroom, there is a risk of “reaffirm[ing] gendered roles and call[ing] into question what it means to care (Ropers-Huilman)” and “reinforc[ing] the mind/body split that many feminists complicate” (Richards, 2011, p. 8). Here is where bell hooks’ thoughts come into play as she has a way to pivot from ethics of care beautifully.

Richards explained that

bell hooks shifts from the language of an ‘ethics of care’ to that of eros or the erotic in the classroom. She makes this shift because the latter acknowledges that teachers and students are bodies interacting in an educational setting, and that this shift back to the body ‘betray[s] the legacy of repression and denial that has been handed down to us by our professorial elders, who have been usually white and male’.

(Richards, 2011, p. 8)

Richards goes on to explain:

By calling out eros, which is too often limited by its association to sexual power, hooks makes visible that a critical, feminist

pedagogy requires a love that is understood through embodiment—understanding and acknowledging that teachers and students alike have and are responsible for their material bodies interacting in the course.

(Richards, 2011, pp. 8–9)

More of bell hooks' insights into bringing Feminist pedagogy into the classroom can be found in her 1994 seminole work *Teaching to Transgress*. In this book, she weaves Feminist and critical pedagogies together to form a “[p]rogressive, holistic education, ‘engaged pedagogy’” while also critiquing feminism for instance pointing out how some Feminist spaces do not recognize the Feminist voices of Black women or women of color (hooks, 1994, p. 15). The perspective of bell hooks specifically and Black feminism more generally clearly provides novel and necessary insights for approaching learning for both educator and learner.

Lastly, Richards outlines the third element of Feminist pedagogy: “... attending to community-based exigencies through collaboration. This can come in the form of a community-based curriculum, service learning, or feminist participatory research, which is also known as participatory action research (PAR)” (Richards, 2011, p. 9). Richards further explains, “Service learning asks students to ‘test the merits of what they learn in the ... classroom against their experiences as volunteers at local sites’” (Richards, 2011, p. 9). Likewise, PAR can be understood as a form of service-learning that seeks to bring together “researchers and oppressed people to join in solidarity to take collective action” (Richards, 2011, p. 9). While PAR can be a powerful resource for educators to use in their learning environments, it is not without critique.

Students are asked in these forms of Feminist pedagogy praxis “to engage in and complicate power dynamics that emerge in collaboration and practical application” (Richards, 2011, p. 9). For some students, this could mean that their work in the community affirms their notions that those community members need their help and can envision themselves as liberal saviors. Avoiding these kinds of misalignments can be achieved by incorporating activist research. In so doing, knowledge is created “with [emphasis in original] community members by combining ‘ethnographic techniques with notions of reciprocity and dialogue to ensure reciprocal and mutually beneficial relations’” (Richards, 2011, p. 9). While the critique is valid, there is still a rich tapestry to draw from for Feminist-inspired

education. There are also Womanist ways of learning which can inform educators and learners alike.

In the previously mentioned book, *Ain't I a Womanist, Too: Embodying Womanism*, Arisika Razak writes a chapter entitled “Notes toward a Holistic and Liberating Pedagogy.” Razak crafts a Womanist pedagogy that is characterized in five parts:

- 1) it acknowledges body, mind, heart, and spirit as human dimensions of being that must be brought into the classroom;
- 2) it privileges the development of a liberatory consciousness;
- 3) it takes an oppositional stance against racist, sexist, and homophobic oppression in theory and practice; 4) it encourages human review of our place within a sacred earthly world; 5) it is based on acceptance and tolerance for all members of the human family; and 6) it underscores our need for rest and replenishment—a conceptual combination that, for me, was initially presented by Walker's womanist definition.

(Coleman, p. 221)

Razak outlines various theories, ideologies, and insights along with womanism that inform her pedagogy and her chapter is rich with information any educator looking to raise the consciousness of their classroom would appreciate.

Another resource for Womanist pedagogy is Professor of Anthropology Cheryl Rodriguez's entry in *Womanist Theory and Research* in 1996 entitled, “Anthropology and Womanist Theory: Claiming the Discourse on Gender, Race, and Culture.” For non-white anthropologists, Rodriguez notes that incorporating Feminist and Womanist epistemologies allows for the embrace of knowledge production and representation as well as an opportunity to use anthropological research to advance vulnerable communities. Rodriguez leans on Patricia Hill Collins' work defining womanism as a basis for how to fold womanism into the classroom. According to Collins, Womanist thought is informed by awareness, activism, intellectualism, struggle, and self-definition (Rodriguez, 1996, p. 4). Just as feminism and Cyberfeminism have informed classrooms on and offline, womanism and technowomanism have their own gifts to offer educators and learners as well.

Applications or Potential Applications for Learning Online

Apply Theories to Online Classrooms

As Feminist pedagogy rose from activists in the streets to classrooms, the onset of the Internet once again pivoted the concept as learning was led online. Here, we can return to Richards who wrote extensively on how and why Feminist pedagogy needed to be augmented in order to leap to the computer screen. In her own words, Richards assesses the moment thusly:

The confluence of proliferating classroom-based technologies and increases in DE [distance education] course offerings means that in the second decade of the twenty-first century, feminist pedagogy cannot be assumed to be an embodied, f2f [face-to-face] practice reminiscent of the consciousness-raising practices of second wave, U.S. liberal feminism.

(Richards, 2011, p. 6)

She pointed out that, "...feminist teaching usually involves practices that are attentive to embodiment, relationships, community, and collaboration. However, these principles get *displaced*—not replaced—with new media technologies" (Richards, 2011, p. 9). Richards describes a classroom in which "bodies are transformed into changeable avatars...or [our] textual presence comes to represent the totality of our classroom presence" through technology which challenges the Feminist teacher to "maintain a focus on making power dynamics transparent without traditional notions of embodiment, relations, and collaboration" (Richards, 2011, p. 9). Her answer to the challenge is Cyberfeminism.

As we mentioned earlier, Cyberfeminism comprises more than just one single movement or agenda. It is pluralism. Richards employs Cyberfeminism as an axel across which Feminist pedagogy can turn and move forward as Cyberfeminist pedagogy. For her, any feminist teachers who intend to use Web 2.0 technologies within their teaching tools would do well to adopt Cyberfeminist pedagogy. According to Richards, Cyberfeminist pedagogy

...would attend to the ways in which digital technologies both subvert and re-inscribe gender, race, and other corporeal hierarchies

in virtual space; it would be attentive to the productive and ironic play of cyberfeminist activism and theory. But cyberfeminist pedagogy would also commit to the tenets of feminist pedagogy such as ethics of care, community-based curriculum, collaboration, and embodied praxis.

(Richards, 2011, pp. 6–7)

Clearly Richards sees the merits of traditional Feminist pedagogy and wants to hold fast to many of its tenets; however, there are so many tactics and skills that she engages with on top of them that fall squarely into Cyberfeminist pedagogy.

One example anchors the Cyberfeminist pedagogy experience in new media technology which, “allows [her] students and [her] to co-construct our shared space and to deconstruct power flows and dynamics” (Richards, 2011, p. 14). On the one hand, teachers and students use the digital space to create online identities, and on the other, each uses the same technologies to play with and deconstruct their creations. The play and irony with which online virtual identities are constructed and deconstructed are key to usurping hierarchies that exist offline—a goal of Cyberfeminist pedagogy. That same play can be exacted on any and all course technologies whether to find workarounds or to solve problems. Ultimately, Richards believes that “...cyberfeminist pedagogy should engage in three major praxes: deliberate engagement and construction of virtual identities, a recursive reflective process of online identities and participation, and a playful and ironic relationship to classroom-based technologies” (Richards, 2011, p. 18). Equipped with these approaches, any Feminist educator could transition to an online classroom with confidence. And yet, there are even more ways to design online courses with Feminist pedagogy!

Gender studies professor Betsy Eudey also outlines many of these best practices for online classrooms. To start, Eudey expresses a practice that many Feminist educators also endorses in their work: using a constructivist pedagogy. According to Eudey, such a pedagogy will “de-center the authority of the instructor as transmitter of knowledge, promote student-centered teaching approaches, encourage student-to-student interaction, connect learning to lived experiences, and ‘emphasize students’ abilities to solve real-life, practical problems’ as well as “...alleviate a sense of disconnection and isolation from classmates and instructors, recognize the self-directed aspects of online learning, and create opportunities for

students to test out their knowledge and understanding as a way to self-check progress" (Eudey, 2012, p. 235). This approach reaps many benefits for online learners and helps the educator shift into a more facilitator role rather than an expert.

Another best practice from Eudey's perspective involves how educators engage with the technology itself. Eudey relies on Nancy Chick and Holly Hassel's work when she ascertains educators, "use technologies to support pedagogical aims rather than allowing the technologies to shape pedagogy" (Eudey, 2012, p. 248). It is important to not allow the various gadgets and digital tools to lead the formation and construction of an online or hybrid course. In addition to how to orient oneself with technology writ large, there is also a consideration for working within the Internet itself. Here, Eudey lifts Sharon Collingwood's thoughts. Collingwood insists, "the feminist classroom must prepare students for the rough-and-tumble nature of Internet discourse" by "building social media literacy into the curriculum, helping students to understand the ways in which online communication and access is [sic] structured, coded, monitored, supported, and/or responded to" (Eudey, 2012, p. 242). With these goals in mind, we can now consider a specific example of Feminist pedagogy manifesting in the online classroom: civic engagement and service-learning.

We have already covered how service-learning upholds the aims of Feminist pedagogy by helping students take the knowledge they have learned and compare it to experiences outside of the classroom as well as offering students and activists in the community the opportunity to organize and enact change together. When creating opportunities for community learning in an online class, Feminist educators would do well to keep a few items in mind. First, Eudey also has thoughts around Cyberfeminism in the Feminist classroom to augment Richards' points which relate to the social justice aims of service-learning. She states "'cyberfeminism' should be reserved for those forms of activism that not only utilize the Internet, but also include critical reflection of the ways in which sexism and other oppressions are components of the online experience" (Eudey, 2012, p. 241). What this translates into is the incorporation of Cyberfeminism into service-learning makes the most sense when it is combined with engagement and wrestling with any elements of oppression that are present within a person's experiences online.

While students will be using the Internet likely for some or all of their civic engagement, educators will also need to help problematize the Internet within that context. Eudey says it thusly:

The social justice aims of feminist pedagogies, women's and gender studies programs, and civic engagement can all be achieved in online courses if projects are carefully designed to incorporate knowledge/skill development, application, and reflection, and to capitalize upon and problematize the Internet as a site for activism and communication.

(Eudey, 2012, p. 248)

Combined with the previous insight, Feminist educators are called to have their learners use and critique the Internet as well as confront the digital manifestations of oppressions that accompany online experiences. While such advice is helpful, more concrete examples may also give educators a leg up in their efforts to incorporate Feminist pedagogy into their online classrooms. While Eudey's article provides several complete examples of how to create online civic engagement projects, here are a few ideas to get educators started:

Examples of wholly online service projects include creating or digitizing materials and submitting these electronically to an agency; posting materials to a website, wiki, blog, or social networking page to support or promote agency activities or interests; creating or expanding an online presence for an agency; interacting online or by phone with agency clients, donors, or volunteers; working with organizational databases; engaging in research and outreach activities; and translating current agency materials into additional languages.

(Eudey, 2012, p. 240)

Between utilizing Cyberfeminism and constructivist pedagogy, engaging with and problematizing the Internet (and all technologies brought into the online classroom), and crafting online civic engagement projects, the sky is the limit for online classrooms to be steeped in Feminist pedagogy. There is also a great opportunity for applying a Technowomanist pedagogy to learning environments. Though a nascent concept, the tenets of being interdisciplinary, intersectional, and

engaging with technology (including the digital space) lend themselves well to being incorporated as part of an educational approach for online learners.

Examples of Best Practices for Course Design That Engage Women as Online Learners

When crafting a course with the intentionality of incorporating Feminist pedagogy for online learners, women-identified learners, in particular, there are a number of best practices to lean on as a guide. Scholar Virginia L. Byrne provides pertinent insights for engaging women as online learners in her publication entitled, “Contemporary Online Course Design Recommendations to Support Women’s Cognitive Development.” The first best practice, however, comes from Rebecca S. Richards and actually applies to all online learners. She states, “...students of all gendered performances need to be encouraged to claim their uses of technologies if they are to challenge the sexist hierarchies of the material world” (Richards, 2011, p. 18). While we will be focusing on women as online learners, it is still important to note that dismantling gender inequity in the classroom, on and offline, will take addressing all students.

Before diving into more best practices, it is important to note why a focus on women is important when designing an online course. Byrne helps paint the picture that offline issues with hierarchies and gender inequity follow learners and educators into the digital classroom. Byrne said “Gender power common in traditional learning environments is present in online higher education classes, hindering women from experiencing the benefits of an equitable learning environment” (Byrne, 2018, p. 1). And even though online women learners on average earn higher grades than their male counterparts, being silenced and critiqued “hinder[s] women’s opportunities for learning” and dampers the process of developing one’s voice which is a crucial element to higher education results (Byrne, 2018, p. 1). All this being said, it is also important not to approach addressing these issues from a deficit mentality that sees male students as the standard and non-male-identified students as needing additional support or resources. Byrne instead advocates for “an anti-deficit, Gender Mainstreaming approach in which the online course design integrates inclusive practices across the learning environment for all learners to enjoy” which results in a “women-friendly” learning

environment that does not see non-male students as needing additional support (Byrne, 2018, p. 2). Researchers have studied differences in online learning between male- and female-identified learners with mixed and inconsistent results (Chyung, 2007). However, regardless of the identities present in the learning environment, each one is unique and requires a tailored approach for the learners involved and the content to be covered.

Byrne's publication highlights two best practices in particular for engaging women online learners which fall into the anti-deficit approach. The first practice is, "[a]ssessments are connected to learning objectives and provide learners with feedback that is personalized, encouraging, and recognizes what they know" (Byrne, 2018, p. 3). Byrne expresses that this practice is rooted in Belenky et al.'s *Women's Way of Knowing* (1986) which lifted insights from over 100 interviews with women to discover the importance of voice and co-creation in knowledge production within a learning environment. This seminal work also influenced Byrne's second-best practice: "[i]nstructors respect and connect class-related knowledge to knowledge from firsthand experience, prior classes, and out-of-class activities" (Byrne, 2018, p. 3). By acknowledging and folding in non-class-related knowledge from students, educators can validate the knowledge that their students carry, especially non-male-identified students.

Conclusion

Feminisms and womanisms have had rich and full histories which we only briefly touched upon in this chapter. Each has experienced waves and epochs which shifted the focus and key players of feminism and womanism. When these ideologies were applied to pedagogy beginning in the 1960s through women's studies courses and programs, their reach broadened. Then, when those pedagogies engaged with the online and digital classroom, a different manifestation and approach of Feminist and Womanist ideas came into being. Best practices for online learners were also explored to highlight the need for anti-deficit gender mainstream and women/non-gender conforming friendly environments. One of the main best practices in this regard involved recognizing experiences outside of classroom knowledge as valid knowledge from students as well as shifting as an educator from expert to facilitator.

There is so much information available now about online learning and separately Feminist pedagogy. The resources used in this chapter are by

no means exhaustive of the nexus between online learning and Feminist pedagogy. However, further research can be conducted on Womanist and Technowomanist pedagogy in classrooms. Another recommendation for further research involves opening our language around gender to include other identities and learning about their needs in the classroom. As more people are recognizing gender as the spectrum it is, those students will need support and Feminist/Womanist pedagogies and their factions are well equipped to take on the task of uncovering those needs and celebrating them. In addition to diving deeper into the histories of feminisms and womanisms, reading the full text of the resources cited here would help to keep the conversation going and encourage those educators to even better understand how to design their learning environments for all learners.

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