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There are three waves of feminism to consider in the history and crises of feminism internationally. The first wave was distinguished by women of color “challenging white feminist assumptions on the primacy of ‘sex’ (Gurel, 86)”. The second wave of feminism is characterized by the international elements of feminism and culminated with the first UN Decade of women (1975-1985)w which “accentuated the divides between Western and non-Western feminisms (Gurel, 86)”. Finally, the third wave of feminism is driven by women from third world countries who criticize the largely Western assumption that the essence of being female is enough to unite women globally due to the cultural and socio-economical divide between Western women and women from developing countries. “Transnational feminism developed out of these cathartic crises as a feminism that strives to organize around issues, encourage complex analyses of how gender and sexuality intersect with other sites of power, and support local actors. However, students must not forget that feminism continues to be non-monolithic, contentious, and in flux” (Gurel, 86).

Third world feminism is an intriguing concept that appears to be driving more significant change globally than Western feminism ever could because it addresses the needs of women who are not represented in the global scene. Third world feminists take a radical approach that refutes the idea of a universal experience for all women. “While calling for attention to the hybridity and multiplicity of identities, they also embrace the diversity and differences in perspective among women. Acknowledging the necessity of recognizing multiple sources of domination in women's lives, they refute the universalization of women's experience and recognize instead the differences among women from different social locations. Taking into account the many differences that make up the category "women," they allow feminism to deal more adequately with the complex and myriad issues we face today (Yu).” This different approach is necessary because, “Western feminism, which ignores realities of women who are being confronted with diversities of values and religious lifestyle, has often been criticized of being essentialist, monolithic, and ethnocentric (Yu).” For many women, religious values are just as important as feminist ones, so they must find a balance between the two that works in their own cultures.

This is the case for Asian women, who have very different history and cultural ideals than Western women and have struggled with the stigma against feminism as a “Western intrusion incompatible with Asian traditions (Yu).” Their struggle for their own feminist identity is “inevitably pulled between Asian and western feminist values…they must learn to negotiate the differences across cultural divides. In their struggles with western feminism, however, they were informed by women's issues aligned with those of race, class, community, nation and religious identity as well as the simultaneous shaping of women's identities by all these discourses (Yu).” It becomes clear that Western feminism is not a cross cultural model of feminist identity and that while increased rights are a common goal for women globally, different cultures approach this progress differently and according to their own beliefs.

Feminism in Islamic countries is a rising theme, but feminists are careful how to identify their cause to reduce the stigma associated with rejecting traditional values. “Women who try to defend their rights in Muslim contexts often are accused of importing a foreign ideology whenever they ask for social justice. Thus, many Islamic feminists first try to demonstrate that they are truly and genuinely rooted in their culture, expending considerable energy to distinguish themselves from ‘Western feminists,’ as, for instance, ‘Third World feminists (Ahmadi)”. In the case of Iran, however, feminism has emerged in a different way which allows for both the traditional values and the feminist ideals. “In the Islamic world, an important historical trend has structured categories of the West and the East; modernism and [Islam](http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/keyword/islam); and feminism and cultural authenticity as necessarily exclusive, forcing Muslim women to choose between claims to a cultural self and a feminist self. However, the new trend emerging among Islamic feminists in Iran is a radical break from this pattern. Iranian Islamic feminists now use theories and methodologies of both Islamic and secular schools (Ahmadi.” The allowance for this shift in feminism may be due to the fact that Iran has never been colonized, leaving it free from the imposition of Western ideals.