



Neoliberalism and its Impact on the Women's Movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Where Have All the Feminists Gone?

Julia Schuster

palgrave
macmillan

Neoliberalism and its Impact on the Women's Movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Julia Schuster

Neoliberalism and its
Impact on the
Women's Movement
in Aotearoa/New
Zealand

Where Have All the Feminists Gone?

palgrave
macmillan

Julia Schuster
Vienna, Austria

ISBN 978-3-030-95522-9 ISBN 978-3-030-95523-6 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95523-6>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: © erhui1979

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Someone once told me that the acknowledgements of a book show that there is a real person behind all its pages. I want to alter this a little: they show that there are many people behind those pages.

This book is based on my PhD project at the University of Auckland. Without the participants of this project's study, this book would not exist. These 40 amazing women generously shared their experiences and time with me, and for this I am deeply grateful. I was also lucky to have a team of supportive supervisors for my PhD project: Louise Humpage, Maureen Baker and Avril Bell. I also thank my former Sociology PhD colleagues who shared the journey, cake and sunlight-deprivation with me. Jessica Terruhn and Jingjing Zhang, your continuing friendship means a lot. Overall, I thank the Sociology Department for all the support provided during those four years and the University of Auckland for offering me a much-needed scholarship.

A few years have gone by since my time in Aotearoa/New Zealand and I am grateful to Helma Lutz for persistently encouraging me to finally turn this work into a book.

I am further grateful to the anonymous reviewers of my manuscript for their very helpful suggestions and comments, and to my editors at Palgrave Macmillan.

The biggest 'Thank You' goes to my parents who supported me in every conceivable way and it hurts that I cannot show the finished book to mum anymore.

Last (and also least!), I thank 'the lions' for putting things into perspective.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
	<i>Women's Movements and Their Political Opportunities</i>	4
	<i>Conceptualising Women's Movements</i>	5
	<i>Political Opportunities</i>	7
	<i>Empirical Foundation</i>	9
	<i>Interviews</i>	10
	<i>Content Analysis of Websites</i>	11
	<i>Content Analysis of Documents</i>	12
	<i>Feminism, Neoliberalism and Colonialism in Aotearoa/New Zealand</i>	13
	<i>Neoliberalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand</i>	15
	<i>Colonialism in Aotearoa/New Zealand</i>	17
	<i>Outline of the Book</i>	20
	<i>References</i>	21
2	Neoliberalism and its Relationships with Feminism, Intersectionality and Postcolonialism	29
	<i>Understanding Neoliberalism</i>	30
	<i>Neoliberalism and Feminism</i>	35
	<i>Neoliberalism and the Feminist Movement</i>	35
	<i>Neoliberalism and the Erasure of Feminism</i>	37
	<i>Third Wave Feminism and Neoliberalism</i>	38
	<i>Feminist Neoliberalism?</i>	42
	<i>Neoliberalism and Intersectionality</i>	43

	<i>Neoliberalism and Postcolonialism</i>	46
	<i>A Triangular Relationship</i>	48
	<i>Colonialism and the Feminist Movement</i>	49
	<i>Colonialism and Intersectionality</i>	50
	<i>References</i>	51
3	The Story so Far	59
	<i>The First Wave Movement</i>	60
	<i>The Long Fight for Suffrage</i>	61
	<i>Māori Women and the Vote</i>	63
	<i>The Second Wave Movement</i>	64
	<i>From Sisterhood to Fragmentation</i>	65
	<i>Diversity Within the Second Wave Movement</i>	68
	<i>The Third Wave Movement</i>	70
	<i>A Generational Shift</i>	71
	<i>State Feminism Until the Mid-2010s</i>	73
	<i>State Feminism and Women's Diversity</i>	77
	<i>The Fourth Wave Movement</i>	79
	<i>What's New? The Significance of Digital Feminism</i>	80
	<i>A New Political Era</i>	82
	<i>Four Waves, One Movement?</i>	82
	<i>References</i>	83
4	Feminist Foundations	91
	<i>Herstories</i>	92
	<i>Growing Up</i>	93
	<i>University</i>	94
	<i>Male-Dominated Environments</i>	95
	<i>Experiences of Violence</i>	96
	<i>Influential People and Events</i>	97
	<i>Evolving Identities</i>	97
	<i>The Meanings of Feminism</i>	99
	<i>This Is What a Feminist Looks Like!</i>	99
	<i>What Is Feminism?</i>	101
	<i>Equality for Whom?</i>	102
	<i>Negotiating Differences</i>	104
	<i>Inclusiveness</i>	106

	<i>Talking About Generations</i>	107
	<i>Difficult Relationships</i>	108
	<i>Ungrateful Youth?</i>	109
	<i>Online Activism</i>	111
	<i>Sex-Positivity</i>	112
	<i>Neoliberal Rationality and Feminist Understandings</i>	115
	<i>References</i>	118
5	Individualised Feminism	121
	<i>Forms of Individualised Feminism</i>	122
	<i>Feminist Bubbles</i>	124
	<i>Self-improvement</i>	126
	<i>Educating Others</i>	128
	<i>Individualism Within Collective Events: SlutWalk</i>	130
	<i>The Personal and the Political</i>	133
	<i>Individualised Feminism Under Neoliberalism</i>	137
	<i>References</i>	139
6	Organisational Feminism	141
	<i>Changed Opportunities for Organisations</i>	142
	<i>Professionalism and Formalisation</i>	144
	<i>Fighting for Funding</i>	146
	<i>Between Fragmentation and Inclusiveness</i>	149
	<i>Biculturalism, Multiculturalism and Parallel Developments</i>	151
	<i>Difficult Differences</i>	153
	<i>Neoliberal Effects on Organisational Work</i>	158
	<i>References</i>	161
7	State Feminism	165
	<i>The Difficult Position of State Feminism</i>	168
	<i>How Feminists View the Government</i>	168
	<i>How Feminists View State Feminism</i>	170
	<i>The Work of Government Departments: Gender Mainstreaming?</i>	172
	<i>'Hidden' Women</i>	174
	<i>The Work of the Ministry of Women's Affairs</i>	175
	<i>Strategic Priorities</i>	176
	<i>Acknowledging Differences?</i>	176

<i>‘Dear Government, Please Do ...’</i>	177
<i>Specific Suggestions</i>	178
<i>Funding Priorities</i>	180
<i>General Wishes</i>	181
<i>State Feminism in a Neoliberal State</i>	182
<i>References</i>	185
8 This Is What a Women’s Movement Looks Like (in Neoliberal Times)	187
<i>Neoliberal Struggles</i>	188
<i>Individualisation?</i>	189
<i>Depolitisation?</i>	190
<i>Fragmentation?</i>	191
<i>Hiding the Movement</i>	193
<i>Finding the Movement</i>	196
<i>Mobilising ‘Women’</i>	196
<i>Sustaining Through Abeyance</i>	198
<i>Making Claims on Women’s Behalf</i>	199
<i>Connecting the Three Levels of the Movement</i>	202
<i>Looking Forwards</i>	204
<i>References</i>	206
Appendix	209
Glossary of Māori Words	213
Index	215

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julia Schuster received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, in 2014. She then moved back to Austria, where she held a post-doctoral position in the Department for Women's and Gender Studies at the Johannes Kepler University Linz for six years, conducting research in the fields of intersectionality theory and labour market discrimination. Since 2020, she works at Statistics Austria, focussing on migration statistics, while writing in the areas of her expertise.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Accident Compensation Corporation
Afem	Anarcha-feminist
ALRANZ	Abortion Law Reform Association
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty
AWC	Auckland Women's Centre
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CEDAW	United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
CREDS	Central Region Eating Disorder Services
DIY	Do it Yourself
EDEN	Eating Difficulties Education Network
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunities
FPP	First-past-the-post representation
KLWV	Kapiti Living Without Violence
LWC	Labour Women's Council
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
MMP	Mixed-member-proportional representation
MoH	Ministry of Health
MPIA	Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs
MSD	Ministry of Social Development
MVS	Maximum variation sampling
MWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NACEW	National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women
NCWNZ	National Council of Women
NGO	Nongovernment organisation

NZNO	New Zealand Nurses Organisation
NZPC	New Zealand Prostitute Collective
NZWIMA	NZ Division of Women's International Motorcycling Association
OMWWL	Māori Women's Welfare League (Opotiki)
PACIFICA	Pacific Allied (Women's) Council Inspires Faith in Ideals Concerning All
RWNZ	Rural Women in New Zealand
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
TPK	Te Puni Kōkiri; Ministry of Māori Affairs
TVNZ	Television New Zealand
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WHA	Women's Health Action Trust
WSA	Women's Studies Association
WYFC	Wellington Young Feminist Collective

LIST OF TABLES

Table A1	Interview participant characteristics	209
Table A2	Organisations included in the website analysis	210
Table A3	Focus, clientele and feminist characteristics according to the organisations' websites	210



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The relationship between neoliberalism and Western women’s movements is complicated because neither of them are monolithic nor simplistic phenomena, and they have influenced each other in multiple ways. This book takes a closer look at this relationship and aims at entangling those complications with the purpose of explaining how women’s movements—as social justice movements—work and survive within a political environment that is not in their favour. Aotearoa¹/New Zealand is an interesting place for such investigation. Neoliberalism—despite being a heterogeneous project that developed different facets across different national and historic contexts—affects all feminist movements situated in the Global North and beyond. Aotearoa/New Zealand’s rapid and radical introduction of the neoliberal project in the mid-1980s and its later shift to the ‘Third Way’ (which was claimed to reduce social inequalities produced by neoliberalism but arguably reinforced them) resulted in particularly pronounced changes of the women’s movement’s agency, strategies and challenges. Moreover, being a bicultural nation (i.e., Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi officially recognises European and Māori culture as equal) that also hosts a large population from the Pacific and

¹Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand and is commonly translated into ‘long white cloud’. I employ both names in this book.

from different parts of Asia, issues of postcolonialism and intersectionality are an inherent part of Aotearoa/New Zealand's women's movement's history and practices. Both postcolonial and intersectional perspectives have become crucial components of analysing any feminist movement situated in the Global North. This book's case study links intersectional and postcolonial struggles of the movement with its neoliberal opportunities. It also makes use of the current situation, in which Aotearoa/New Zealand's neoliberal era is, perhaps, not over, but considerably slowed down. The change in government in 2017 represented a political cut that promised to move away from and undo (some) neoliberal policy making of the previous three decades. Thus, I can offer a tentative retrospective that takes stock of the effects neoliberalism had on the women's movement to this point.

My aim to investigate Aotearoa/New Zealand's women's movement under neoliberalism takes a broad approach. There are multiple dynamics that have changed the political opportunities and the character of feminist work in Aotearoa/New Zealand on several levels, and I intend to address them by looking at the movement on several interconnected levels: the micro-level of individual feminists, the meso-level of women's organisations and the macro-level of state feminism. Such an approach does not allow a detailed examination of each of these levels but that is not my intention. Other authors have already provided useful in-depth studies of various selected aspects of Aotearoa/New Zealand's women's movement during neoliberalism. For example, Grey (2008a, 2009) explored developments of feminist grassroots activism and its changes between the late 1960s until 2000, and Vanderpyl (2004) and Aimers (2011) explained women's organisations' struggles to maintain autonomy in neoliberal times. Aotearoa/New Zealand's state feminism has been discussed by Hyman (2010) and Curtin (2008), who provided insight into the work of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA)² and the importance of the Labour Women's Council (see also Curtin & Teghtsoonian, 2010), and Teghtsoonian (2004) analysed the opportunities of gender mainstreaming. Simon-Kumar (2011) and Kahu and Morgan (2007) investigated the feminist character of neoliberal policy, and while McMillan et al. (2009)

²In 2014, the Ministry's name was changed to Ministry for Women. For consistency reasons, I will use the old name throughout the book, as it was the official name during the time of my study and therefore, also my empirical sources refer to it as the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

offered an insightful account of women's political involvement ranging from activism to representation in Parliament, they primarily focussed on the institutionalised side of feminism.

Rather than replicating this work I want to provide a comprehensive perspective on Aotearoa/New Zealand's women's movement during the neoliberal era that discusses individualised, organisational and state feminism as well as the relationships between them and to offer an explanation as to how feminist activities on the three levels complement each other. My approach of investigating the macro-, meso- and micro-level simultaneously allows a discussion of the different roles that these levels have in the women's movement. As I will show, feminist activities on all three levels were shaped by challenges and opportunities within their specific contexts and only a perspective that examines all three levels can unpack how they, together, constituted a women's movement that persevered through neoliberal times.

Yet, the story is more complex than a narration of how neoliberalism limited the opportunities for feminism and co-opted feminist attempts to change politics. Using Wendy Brown's (2006, 2015) concept of neoliberal rationality, I will also argue that, over the course of 30 years, neoliberal values have become hegemonic in Aotearoa/New Zealand, infiltrating all of society, including feminist circles. Rather than a simple neoliberal co-option of feminism, my study shows that feminists have battled against neoliberal challenges but they also have taken some aspects of neoliberal rationality and re-applied them for their purposes. On the one hand, the women's movement struggled to withstand the challenges posed by a neoliberal political environment, which limited feminist agency and advocacy mainly at the meso- and macro-levels of the movement (e.g., restricted funding and outcome-specific government contracts silenced the political voice of women's organisations). On the other hand, neoliberal values also encouraged individualised approaches to feminist engagement and they shaped the strategies feminists themselves applied to tackle challenges based, for instance, on the acknowledgement of differences among women. Aotearoa/New Zealand's colonial heritage and the way that neoliberal approaches dealt with this heritage, added to these challenges for the movement. In conclusion, I will suggest that the women's movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand became fragmented and appeared to be 'invisible' under neoliberalism; however, according to Sawer's (2010) definition of women's movements, these changes did not end the movement, they just altered its ways.

Before this book delves into its main discussion, this introductory chapter sets the scene for my analysis. It clarifies what a women's movement is on a theoretical level and it discusses how political opportunities can be understood to impact on a movement's rise and decline as well as on the strategies social movement actors apply to achieve their goals. It also introduces the empirical study on which my findings are based. Subsequently, this chapter offers a brief summary of Aotearoa/New Zealand's history of neoliberalism and colonialism, because the latter is important to understand the impact of the former on feminism in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND THEIR POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES

Women's movements vary significantly in the ways they are constituted, organised and do their work, and it is hard to squeeze them all into one definition. Some scholars distinguish between women's movements and feminist movements (Beckwith 2001; Dann, 1985; Lovenduski, 2008) and argue that women's movements are those which promote women's issues and are under women's leadership. Theoretically, these movements can have any kinds of women's issues as their goals, including right-wing and anti-feminist ones. Women-led pro-life movements are examples of such anti-feminist women's movements. According to this approach, feminist movements are only those subsets of women's movements that are informed by feminist beliefs and pursue the goal of challenging or even abolishing patriarchy.

I do not subscribe to this differentiation between women's movements and feminist movements because I firmly believe that the aims and goals of women's movements are always feminist. Anti-feminist movements do not have the interests of women at heart, some only claim to do so. Pro-life movements, for instance, defend the assumed interests of the foetus, not of women. Moreover, a definitional distinction between women's and feminist movements fails to acknowledge the well-documented reluctance of many women to identify with feminism while supporting the pursuit of gender equality (Baumgardner & Richards, 2003; Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Buschman & Lenart, 1996; Kamen, 1991; Riley et al., 2010; Williams & Wittig, 1997). 'Feminism' is a loaded term that is not used across cultures and is sometimes misinterpreted to carry connotations of extremism and hatred of men (Bulbeck, 2006; Edelman, 2007).

Consequently, an explicitly feminist label will be rejected by some women's movements that challenge patriarchy even though they still meet the criteria of being feminist on a theoretical level. Therefore, I follow authors such as Rosas and Wilson (2003) and apply the terms 'women's movement' and 'feminist movement' for the purpose of this book interchangeably.

The fact that the term 'women' does not include all people active in feminist movements is, admittedly, problematic. Men and other genders are not excluded from (most) feminist communities, they are feminists and do valuable work in the fields of women's empowerment and gender equality. Most importantly, there are also feminist movements that are not women's movements (e.g., queer movements). Yet, for the purpose of this book, I was only interested in the perspective of women on women's movements. The movement was started by women trying to liberate and empower women, and I was interested in the opinion and views of women about this movement because their political interests were historically at the heart of the movement. To be clear, when this book refers to 'women', everyone identifying as a woman is referred to, irrespectively of their biological sex. While other perspectives and perspectives on other feminist movements would without doubt have offered additional and interesting insights, they were not in the focus of this project.

Conceptualising Women's Movements

Lovenduski (2008, p. 175) stated that women's movements are constituted by both 'a form of collective behaviour and the ideas that inspire that behaviour'. This is quite a broad description but I use it as a starting point that suggests a women's movement consists of people engaging in actions that aim for social change and of some form of ideology (feminism) that guides this behaviour. Sawyer (2010) offered a more detailed definition that I find useful for my purpose because it provides a clear structure to guide my assessment of the neoliberal impact on the women's movement. She identified three characteristics of women's movements: first, they are mobilisations of collective identity as women; second, they sustain the challenge of women-centred discourses even through periods of abeyance; and third, they make claims on behalf of women. When related to Lovenduski's definition, this third part of Sawyer's definition suggests that making claims on behalf of women includes achieving social change through collective behaviour that is in the interest of women.

Sawer's way of framing this point does not imply that all claims are made on behalf of all women at the same time, which acknowledges different needs among women. Neither does it suggest that only women can make such claims, which opens women's movements to participants of all genders.

The second part of Sawer's definition—sustaining women-centred discourse through periods of abeyance—is important for Aotearoa/New Zealand's women's movement under neoliberalism because it clarifies that a movement still exists as a movement even though it may be in abeyance. It establishes the idea that keeping women's issues on the political agenda is part of the work of a women's movement. While women's issues are difficult to define, I follow Sapiro (1981) who suggested three categories of women's issues: those in which women have more interest than they have in other issues, issues in which women have more interest than men (or other genders) do and issues in which women have a special interest because of their particular viewpoint. Of course, not all women share all their interests. Thus, it is important to understand these varying interests in relation to the first part of Sawer's definition of women's movements—the mobilisation of collective identity as women—because this relationship clarifies how a diverse group of women can share a common identity.

Collective identities are a crucial component of political mobilisation (Katzenstein, 1990; Melucci, 1989; Whittier, 1995, 1997). Whittier (1995) explained, for example, that a feminist identity is a collective identity. Through adopting such an identity, a group creates a distinction between insiders and outsiders and takes on a certain political consciousness. While their meanings can change over time, collective identities can only exist when individuals agree and act on them. Thus, conceptualising a collective identity is a political process in itself, because it determines who belongs to a group and who does not (Bacchi, 1999; Ferree & Mueller, 2003; Whittier, 1995).

Drawing on this conceptualisation, I understand the collective identity of women as a political category. It reflects those political interests that women share as women. This does not imply that all political interests of all women overlap. Nor does it deny the many instances when political interests of women as women are considered less important than, or contradict, political interests of women as individuals who hold other collective identities, for example those based on race, ethnicity, age or class. But it does assume that some political claims can be made on behalf of women because they are structurally disadvantaged in many social areas.

Returning to Lovenduski's approach of conceptualising women's movements, I need to add some final qualifications to the understanding of collective behaviour. So far, I have addressed the actors of a movement as individuals. But within women's movements, individuals also organise themselves into groups, formal organisations and within government institutions. Ideally, they form alliances between these levels and build interpersonal networks (Dobrowolsky, 1998; Ferree & Mueller, 2003; Katzenstein, 1990; Sawyer, 2010). Aotearoa/New Zealand scholars have confirmed that a feminist presence on all three levels is vital for the survival of feminism (Curtin, 2008; Hyman, 1994). Therefore, I understand women's movements to situate their collective behaviour within the micro- (individual), meso- (groups and organisations) and macro-levels (government and state) of society.

Political Opportunities

The development of social movements can be explained through different theoretical lenses. As I am interested in the influence of neoliberalism on the women's movement, I need an approach that takes the political context of the movement into account. This can be achieved using the political opportunity structure model (Meyer, 2004; Peoples, 2019), which situates and explains the rise and decline of a social movement as well as its choice of strategies within the political climate created by institutional politics. This theory assumes that movements use windows of political opportunity that are available to them at a given time for their purposes. They adapt to their environment. This explains, for example, why the suffragists chose institutionalised strategies like petitions to influence Parliament (because those were the most promising political strategies available to women at the time) or why the Second Wave movement lost force after failing to win ground on the hoped-for abortion law reform (because it was demotivating to see a window of opportunity closing). Most importantly for my purpose, this theory allows for taking into account the effects of neoliberalism on the development of Aotearoa/New Zealand's women's movement after 1984.

The political opportunity structure model belongs to social movement theories that understand movements as 'contentious politics'. This school of thought first developed the 'resource mobilisation model', which argues that movements are not driven by unreasonable and emotional motivations, as earlier theories suggested, but represent rational political

intentions and it asks how and under what circumstances enough financial and human resources are mobilised to address social conflict through a social movement (Dahlerup, 2013; Edelman, 2001; Jenkins, 1983; Kuumba, 2001; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; McDonald, 2002; Melucci & Avritzer, 2000). ‘Political process’ scholars (e.g., McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 2011) adopted these ideas and argued that movement activists choose their goals and strategies within a given political context that is determined by mainstream political actors (Della Porta & Diani, 1999; Kuumba, 2001; Meyer, 2004). McAdam (1982, p. 20), however, defined social movements as ‘rational attempts by excluded groups to mobilise sufficient political leverage to advance collective interests through noninstitutionalized means’. This definition stands in contrast to earlier resource mobilisation approaches since it emphasises political activities outside of institutions. Similarly, Tilly (1984, p. 306) defined social movements as a ‘sustained series of interactions between power holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation’. Pointing towards these interactions, Tilly highlighted the reciprocity between activists or organisations and mainstream political actors.

Eisinger (1973) developed this theory further and was the first to use a ‘political opportunity’ framework, which examines the political climate created by political institutions in a similar way to political process approaches (Meyer, 2004). However, this theory argues that the willingness with which political institutions and governments respond to the demands of a social movement and political dissent helps or hinders the movement’s development. Thus, the political opportunity framework evaluates how much impact collective action can or will have in a given political context (Eisinger, 1973; Staggenborg, 1998; Tarrow, 2011). According to this model, movements will form, if and when there is an opportunity for it to be successful. This does not mean, however, that social movements only form when the political environment is friendly towards its aims. People engage in forms of protest precisely when their political demands are *not* met by institutionalised politics. Put simply, when there is an abundance of political opportunity, there is no need for a movement. Yet, when there is no chance to be successful, emerging protests will not get enough support to form a new or maintain an existing movement. Thus, according to the political opportunity structure model, it ‘is in the middle realm—some political opportunity, but not unfettered access—in which social movements are most likely to form and have success’ (Peoples, 2019, p. 27).

Political opportunity theory and its predecessor, the political process model, have received some criticism (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). Several scholars argued that these theories explain how political environments create or inhibit opportunities for social movements but leave the question ‘opportunity for what?’ unanswered (Cornwall et al., 2007). Others have argued that the ‘political opportunities’ concept has been stretched to become synonymous with ‘environment’ or given so many different meanings, that the concept has become empty (Goodwin & Jasper, 1999). Addressing the first concern, I am interested in the political opportunities of a women’s movement in neoliberal Aotearoa/New Zealand for surviving and for creating new approaches of feminist activism, despite adverse conditions. In relation to the second critique, I can clarify that the political opportunities I describe refer to the avenues and possibilities for feminists to pursue their political agenda. These opportunities differ for individual women, women’s organisations and state feminist institutions because of their different work priorities as well as their different positions in relation to political institutions and government. However, for all three of these levels, neoliberal rationality adopted by institutional entities such as government and the mainstream media has shaped these opportunities considerably. Framing such changes in a positive way, Newman (2012, p. 139) even argued for the British context that under the influence of neoliberalism, feminists ‘generated new things: new pathways, new policies, new public conversations, new organizational practices, new governance foci, and new ways of understanding and practising politics’.

EMPIRICAL FOUNDATION

This book is based on my dissertation project, which I conducted between 2010 and 2014 at the University of Auckland. At the time of the project, I did not know that the Fifth National Government would be replaced by the Sixth Labour Government in 2017, changing the course from neoliberal to more welfare-orientated politics. As I am finishing this book, I do not know for how long this type of governance will last. What I do know is that my empirical work was conducted during the early period of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s Third Wave movement. For the purpose of this book, this was an ideal time, as generational and ideological shifts between the Second and Third Waves could be observed in detail and the impact of neoliberalism (and the Third Way) on the movement had reached its peak.

My study rests on three empirical data sources. First, it incorporates diverse feminist voices via 40 qualitative interviews with members of Aotearoa/New Zealand's women's movement. Second, it draws on insights from a content analysis of websites of 20 Aotearoa/New Zealand feminist/women's groups and organisations, and, as a third data source, on a content analysis of seven documents that were issued by Aotearoa/New Zealand government departments. Combining these data sources allows relating individual, organisational and state feminist perspectives to each other. Together, they offer personal points of view as well as official representations of organisations and institutions. It is my aim to connect those levels with one another.

Interviews

As my main method of collecting empirical data, I interviewed 40 self-identified women,³ who either called themselves feminist, engaged in political activities focused on or related to women's issues of any kind, and/or worked for an organisation/group/institution involved in work concerned with women's issues.

For reasons I explained earlier, I only interviewed women. Still, diversity was a main aim in selecting interview participants. The final group of 40 women interviewed consisted of 28 Pākehā⁴ women, 8 Asian women, 5 Māori women, 4 women of other European decent (e.g., recent immigrants) and 1 Samoan woman.⁵ They were between the ages of 20 and 70 (although 28 of them were younger than 40 years). I did not ask about the women's sexual identities, but 38 of the participants referred to it themselves during the interview. Most (25) identified as heterosexual, 7 as queer, 5 as lesbian and 1 as bisexual. The Appendix offers a table of my participants' occupations and involvement with women's institutions, organisations and groups (Table A.1).

I adopted a slightly altered version of qualitative 'problem-centred' interviews, a concept developed by Witzel (2000). In this interview format, participants are invited to narrate their views but, in contrast to

³The group of participants consisted mainly, but not exclusively of cis-women, that is, people who identify as female and are biologically female.

⁴New Zealander of European descent.

⁵These numbers add up to over 40 because some of the women identified with two or more ethnic groups.