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Embodied Feminism: An Ethnographic Study of Abortion Access and Hopeful Praxis

By

Nicolette Tuttle

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Master's Thesis

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Nicolette Tuttle

May 18, 2022

Embodied Feminism: An Ethnographic Study of Abortion Access and Hopeful Praxis

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Nicolette Tuttle
May 2022

Abstract

Reproductive justice is of critical concern in the United States, especially since the onslaught of abortion bans in 2019, this ethnographic study explores abortion access and activism through a feminist participatory action research (FPAR) approach during my internship at the Feminist Majority Foundation in Los Angeles, California and clinic escort volunteer work with L.A. For Choice. Embodied feminism, here, takes the shape of a qualitative study of abortion access as well as the praxis of scholar-activism. Themes of opposing biopolitical values among feminist and anti-choice activism, narratives of feminist activism, and creative expression and reflection inform this thesis with further insight on mechanisms advocating for and barriers to reproductive healthcare access and hopeful collaborative visions of equitable realities to come.

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Introduction

Reproductive rights are human rights, and they are especially necessary for people who were assigned female at birth (AFAB). Reproductive autonomy is simultaneously about self-determination, social participation, and the dignity that so tenuously connects the two (McReynolds-Pérez 2017). Included in, but not co-extensive with these reproductive rights, is the right to end a pregnancy through abortion as a means for family planning, reproductive health, and the well-being of the pregnant person. Globally, an estimated 40% of pregnancies are unintended, and a quarter of pregnancies end in abortion, by one means or another, each year. When performed in legal and safe conditions by trained healthcare providers, abortions are one of the safest procedures available, safer even than childbirth. In 2019, headlines of “abortion bans” mostly across mid-western and southern states in the United States spread rapidly across news platforms. Seventeen states enacted restricted access to abortion, while nine states secured or enhanced access.

Since this research, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s last ruling, before her passing in 2020, along with three other justices’ dissents, struck down a law on abortion that would have made abortion virtually inaccessible in Louisiana. Ginsburg was replaced by Amy Coney Barrett, one of three Supreme Court justices nominated by Donald Trump. In 2021, the Supreme Court allowed Texas’ implementation of S.B. 8, banning abortion at about six weeks of pregnancy. Furthermore, Texans may report anyone who assists a pregnant person in obtaining or obtains an abortion in the state of Texas past six weeks of pregnancy for a bounty of \$10,000. To seek an abortion, Texans must be able to leave the state. Oklahoma is no longer an option for that as the state has made it a felony to perform abortions, punishable up to ten years in prison, effective in the summer of 2022. Conservative Missouri lawmakers are pushing for a first-of-its-

kind proposal to let private citizens sue anyone who aids a Missouri resident have an abortion, even if performed in a state where abortion is legal. In June of this year, 2022, the Supreme Court will decide on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, a case on a fifteen-week abortion ban in Mississippi that intends to overrule *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, causing abortion to fall in the hands of individuals state governments which would deny people across the country access to safe, legal abortion. Kentucky approved a fifteen-week ban, as well, with restrictions on medication abortion. Florida will follow suit in the summer of 2022. "Trigger-laws" await in many states, meaning that with the abandonment of *Roe*, extensive abortion bans would follow ("Timeline of Attacks on Abortion" n.d.).

When abortion procedures are made less accessible or criminalized, the rate of abortions do not change (Seager 2018). Instead, the rate of safe abortions decreases, oftentimes at fatal cost to AFAB people. Unsafe abortions are the third leading cause of maternal deaths, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), and have additional potential costs including mental and physical trauma, economic burden on public health systems, stigma, and long-term health issues, such as sterilization. Equally, a forced birth also may radically alter the course of a person's life. Undesired childbearing may expose the individual to job loss, family or relational rejection, economic challenges, and lost educational opportunities. Many U.S. states enforce contact with an abusive partner, whose visitation rights tend to override the rights of either the parent or child – again, at great cost to the social, emotional, and physical health of each (McReynolds-Pérez 2017).

Abortion is not just for women and girls. Abortion-related discourse must expand to include all people who could undergo it, which includes intersex people, transgender men and boys, and people with other gender identities. Genderqueer individuals of all kinds face higher

levels of discrimination, which compounds intersectionally, than their cisgender counterparts in society and healthcare settings.

This project explores feminist activist efforts for reproductive healthcare access. What follows is the result of qualitative participatory action research at the nonprofit organization the Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF) in Los Angeles, California during the winter of 2020. The idea of reproductive justice isn't new, but the questions that it raises, and the challenges that it poses, have powerfully shaped this thesis. Reproductive justice has always been fought for by black, indigenous, and transgender people, but the term was invented in 1994 by a group of black women in Chicago, the Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice, in order to uplift the needs of marginalized people reproductive rights and social justice who were not included in the women's rights movement which represented middle- and upper-class white women. Reproductive justice emphasizes access rather than choice; beyond abortion, it supports access to "contraception, comprehensive sex education, STI prevention and care, alternative birth options, adequate prenatal and pregnancy care, domestic violence assistance, adequate wages to support our families, safe homes, and so much more" ("Reproductive Justice" n.d.).

Reproductive justice also implies scholar-activism by centering the importance of experience *as expertise*, which is why the horizontal approach embraced by feminist participatory action research (FPAR), used in this thesis, is a good fit. By bridging scholarship and activism, my intention when beginning this project was to co-create this thesis, with the participants from the FMF, as a product that would support strength in unity for feminist activism goals and provide a potential platform for further research and progress. As Sarah Ahmed (2015) writes:

Archiving sexism is a crucial form of feminist activism. To document is to refuse to agree to something, to refuse to stay silent about something. Bodies are part of this archive, voices

too. Our archive is an archive of rebellion. It testifies to a struggle. To struggle for an existence is to transform an existence. No wonder: there is hope in the assembly.

This research embraces documentation of events and sentiments as a form of feminist praxis.

Moreover, this thesis takes the shape of a bidirectional feminist approach: primarily critiquing past and existing issues that call for on-the-ground work, in contrast to a subsequent direction of hope-filled future co-creation (Ahmed 2015). I was granted access to this research through an internship program for college students through which I chose to focus on FMF's National Clinic Access Project (NCAP). During this internship, I played the dual role of a researcher and volunteer clinic escort with L.A. For Choice. I did so as a feminist researcher and a feminist activist, supporting reproductive healthcare access, while also keenly aware of the growing influence of the anti-choice movement, both virtually and on the ground. In those roles, I learned from my research participants, their narratives and sentiments, their own feminist activism and their visions of hope for the future. As I learned from them, so too did I come to better understand and develop my own feminist subjectivity, as praxis always forces us to do. We talked, worked together, and even produced art together. Participant-produced art serves as an ultra-qualitative data set for exploring power negotiations in contexts of political conflicts, social movement sustenance (González-Hidalgo and Zografos 2020), and affective reflections on current and potential future realities of equity and equality.

This work takes inspiration from feminist anthropology, from studies of affect and social movement, from artistic methodologies, and from scholar-activists who refuse the separation between research and praxis. In this ethnographic exploration of praxis, I adhere to Ahmed's (2015) notion that the personal brings theory back to life, "Bringing the personal into the theoretical does not make experience into a foundation. On the contrary, to write from

experience is to shatter the foundation.” The findings of this thesis support the need for qualitative research, for practicing the revolutionary act of listening (McReynolds-Pérez 2017), and for collaborating in ways that will multiply the possibilities for future praxis.

Chapter One: Literature Review

This research project builds upon several streams of scholarship in anthropology and beyond: scholarship on abortion rights, feminist activism, reproductive justice, New Social Movements, and feminist anthropology.

Because this research project takes place during a moment in United States history in which the right to abortion is, once again, under attack, it is important to present abortion within a human rights framework. After sketching the above literatures, therefore, I narrow in on an overview of the trajectory of abortion in the United States from early in the country's history until the time at which I began conducting research in the winter of 2020. I then discuss literature regarding feminist activism in the United States as it pertains largely to reproductive rights and move into the development of reproductive justice. Finally, I discuss literature on some existing anthropological work and relating theoretical perspectives.

The following is meant to highlight the contributions of those who have come before my generation of scholars and activists and paved the path for this work to continue. This is an abbreviated, sometimes canonical overview of topics on which my research project is built.

Abortion Rights as Human Rights

The idea of basic human rights suggests that all human adults be able to exercise individual autonomy to the fullest extent possible consistent with their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral abilities (Talbot 2007). The concept of reproductive choice as a human right is a fairly recent development due to the popular requisite knowledge and means to control reproduction in Western medicine having only become accessible in the latter half of the 20th century. It was at this time when reproductive freedom was initially acknowledged as a necessary means for securing human rights, specifically for those assigned female at birth

(AFAB) (Cianciarulo 2017). Due to cultural norms which thrust the larger portion of childcare responsibility on AFAB individuals, their ability to acquire other rights – such as education, work, or political aspirations – depend on access to reproductive rights as a fundamental right, as stated in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (Burn 2019).

The 1968 International Conference on Human Rights fomented the first international document with a family planning provision: “parents have a basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and a right to adequate education and information in this respect.” Reproductive freedom, in international human rights law, is widely accepted as including the right, safely and without state interference, to terminate a pregnancy or to carry a pregnancy to term. Various United Nations declarations, conventions, programs, and plans encourage or mandate signatories to allow the choice for individual control of family planning, as well as to provide access to family planning information and education (Cianciarulo 2017). Reproductive rights refer to the right to reproductive health and the right to reproductive determination (“Center for Reproductive Rights” n.d.) Following human rights conferences of the 1990s, synergies developed among different bodies within the United Nations, such as the Centre for Civil and Political Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Together with governments and NGOs, they have contributed to restricting the laws that limit access to abortion in various countries.

Abortion is an ancient and universal practice. Throughout history, it has taken different forms in different political, social, and cultural contexts. Some defend access to abortion as a human right, a woman’s right, a sexual and reproductive right, and a right to health given the dangers of illegal abortions, while others condemn it in the name of the embryo’s own right to life. Historical evidence shows that AFAB people have always obtained abortions using a wide

range of methods, passed on from generation to generation, regardless of proven efficacy. Today, the method used depends on the legal status of abortion, the duration of pregnancy, the available technology, as well as the individual's financial resources and access to providers. It also depends on the qualifications of the practitioner and healthcare environment. Globally, legislation has oscillated between periods of easing and tightening of restrictions, for moral, religious, health, ethical, or legal reasons. Situations range from a total ban on abortion to unrestricted access at the individual's request. Between these two extremes, access to abortion is authorized under certain conditions: protection of pregnant people's lives, their physical and/or mental health, fetal impairment, rape or incest, economic or social reasons, or other specific causes in some countries. Conscientious objection by providers on moral, religious, or philosophical grounds also impedes access to abortion. Laws criminalizing abortion violate not only reproductive rights but also rights to health, liberty, safety, and potentially the right to life. The negation of the right to abortion contradicts rights recognized at international conferences, in commitments adopted by countries around the world, such as the rights to equality, health, and free and responsible decision on the number and spacing of children, as well as sexual and reproductive rights as stipulated at the Cairo Conference and in the CEDAW recommendations. In some countries where the right to abortion seems to be well established, abortion is nevertheless subject to widespread stigma (Guillaume and Rossier 2018).

CEDAW is the only comprehensive global treaty on women's rights. The only countries in the world to have neither signed nor ratified CEDAW are Sudan, Somalia, Iran, and Tonga. Palau and the United States are the only countries to have signed but not ratified CEDAW. The rest of the world has signed and ratified CEDAW (Seager 2018). The United States has and continues to impose restrictions on abortion that violate international human rights standards,

specifically violating the right to safe, legal abortion by imposing access barriers, proliferated by intersectional identities of poor, displaced, and young AFAB individuals (Cianciarulo 2017). The failure of the Supreme Court to provide a convincing explanation in *Roe v. Wade* as to why reproductive autonomy must be deemed a fundamental right set a weak foundation for the constitutional protection of abortion rights, ultimately making it vulnerable to overruling (Chemerinsky and Goodwin 2017). Twenty-four percent of AFAB people in the United States will have an abortion by the age of 45; however, only 38% of AFAB people ages 13 to 44 live in a state supportive of abortion rights. Regions with the most restrictions include the South and Midwest (“Guttmacher Institute” n.d.).

Culture War: An Overview of Abortion Rights in the United States

Historical representations are “conceived, experienced, and interpreted” by specific positionalities within systems of power relations. As such, history and the telling of history is a filtered conception of the past (Morgen 2002). With that, there is a need to discuss the trajectory of the development and status of abortion rights in the United States.

From colonial times until the early nineteenth century, early pregnancy abortion was tolerated or disregarded as abortion was perceived to be practiced mostly among lower-class unmarried women. Connecticut was the first state to outlaw abortion in 1821, banning the use of poison to induce miscarriage after quickening – between sixteen and eighteen weeks of pregnancy. In 1843, the first bill in the United States to deal solely with abortion was passed making abortion after quickening a misdemeanor. The formation of the American Medical Association (AMA) in 1847 amplified the abortion debate. Physicians were in competition with healers and midwives for patients and widespread credibility. To combat this, physicians created an anti-abortion campaign for further restrictions around the nation. Simultaneously, American

immigration politics were forming as white Protestant elites' paranoia of being outnumbered by non-English Catholic immigrants grew. Physicians alerted the public that abortion was practiced by a growing number of middle-class married Protestant women with the development of modern industrial society. Abortion became a perceived demographic threat for the upper class since Catholic women largely followed their church's abortion prohibitions. By 1870, abortion at any stage of pregnancy was outlawed. In 1873, Congress passed the Comstock Act, making it a federal offense to provide any substance that would act as a birth control or cause abortion.

The modern push for reproductive choice reform began in the 1950s and 1960s from Planned Parenthood and the postwar population control movement. In 1955, Planned Parenthood held a breakthrough conference, "Abortion in the United States." Based on Alfred Kinsey's data, the conference speculated that up to 1.2 million unsafe abortions were performed annually, illustrating the public health threat of unsafe, illegal abortion. The conference called upon the American Law Institute (ALI) to draw up model legislation for the states, which produced the "ALI plan", allowing abortions if agreed upon by two doctors and in order to preserve the health of the pregnant person as well as in the cases of rape, incest, or fetal abnormalities. In 1967, Colorado, followed by North Carolina, became the first state to pass a reform law, increasing access to abortions. The same year, the American Baptist Convention voted to support the ALI-style legislation along with an endorsement from the AMA. This campaign power caused ALI-based measures to pass in Arkansas, California, Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, New Mexico, and Oregon.

In the 1960s, the abortion debate shifted culturally from a public health issue to a feminist political issue as the new women's liberation movement shifted focus to sexual freedom and reproductive rights. Feminist activists pushed physicians and population control advocates to

support more fundamental change beyond the ALI model towards full legalization. At the National Organization for Women's (NOW) second annual convention in 1967, the organization endorsed abortion reform for the first time, moving from an economic focus to that of reproductive rights. In 1969, NOW was joined by public health experts and population control advocates at the first National Conference on Abortion Laws where they put together a planning committee which formed the National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL), aimed to pass abortion repeal laws in remaining unpassed states. Hawaii was the first state to pass a law that repeals abortion restrictions in 1970, followed by New York, Alaska, and Washington. These reforms were initially met with minimal backlash mostly from Catholic doctors and lawyers until Eunice Shriver, of the Catholic Kennedy family, arranged for an anti-abortion conference in the nation's capital. The Catholic Church's National Conference of Catholic Bishops began to inspire local anti-abortion organizations, which came to form the mainstream anti-abortion movement, united as the National Right to Life Committee founded by American bishops in 1972. Catholic Church leaders worked to make anti-abortion political changes while street-level anti-abortion protests began to break out (Risen and Thomas 1998).

The 1960s was a time of activism and political transformation in the United States which included civil and women's rights, anti-war, student, and welfare rights movements. Feminist activism in the forms of political lobbying, feminist health clinics, and various organizations were on the rise -- the approaches to activism were as multifaceted as were the means of oppression (Morgen 2002). In 1965, *Griswold v. Connecticut* was the first Supreme Court case to consider a right to prevent procreation as the Court declared that the Constitution protects the right for a married woman to buy and use contraceptives (Chemerinsky and Goodwin 2017) as the right to privacy (Talbot 2007). In 1973, the Supreme Court Justice Blackmun held in *Roe v.*

Wade that the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees a woman a limited right to abortion as a constitutional right (Chemerinsky and Goodwin 2017). The Court provided guidelines for state regulation: “i) within the first trimester, the state’s interest in protecting prenatal life is minimal and thus a woman is entitled to an abortion with very little state interference; ii) within the second trimester, the state’s interest in protecting prenatal life is heightened, and thus the state may impose some restrictions on abortion; and iii) within the third trimester, during which a fetus typically becomes viable, the state may impose even more restrictions on abortion.” (Cianciarulo 2017). The Court, inconsistent with prior rulings, rejected the claim that fetuses are persons. With this ruling, there was an almost immediate 40% decrease in abortion-related deaths (Chemerinsky and Goodwin 2017). *Roe* acknowledges a person’s right to privacy in medical choices made with their doctor, who maintains authority. The Court decision fails to mention abortion on demand (Morgen 2020). Although true backlash was minimal until 1980, days after the *Roe* decision, fifty anti-abortion protesters were waiting for Supreme Court Justice Blackmun on a speaking trip in Iowa (Risen and Thomas 1998). Both on the eve and immediately following *Roe*, many feminist health care activists worked to make abortion widely accessible, organizing many women-controlled health clinics which offered reproductive care. By 1976, there were about fifty clinics across the United States with the shared goal of women’s empowerment and education (Morgen 2002).

Responding to fears that *Roe v. Wade* might be used by federal courts as a justification for requiring individuals and institutions to provide abortions against their will, Congress passed the Church Amendment which protects the conscience rights of workers and institutions in the healthcare industry. Enacted in 1973, the amendment’s protections are seen to be comprehensive. At the individual level, the statute prohibits any government authority from requiring

participation in abortion or sterilization procedures contrary to one's religious or moral convictions, and it further prohibits potential discrimination against either participating or nonparticipating individuals by institutions that receive specified federal funding. At the entity level, the amendment prohibits the federal government from requiring entities that receive designated funds to make their facilities available for abortion or to provide personnel for such procedures. Contextual considerations are necessary in the case of the Church Amendment because the statute is susceptible to multiple interpretations. The Supreme Court has made clear that its decisions relating to abortion and contraception do not establish a constitutional right of access and that conscience clauses are appropriate means of protecting individuals and institutions who object to participation (James 2011).

Passed in 1976 and amended in 1993, the Hyde Amendment banned the use of federal funds for abortion services, except in cases of pregnancies resulting from rape or incest or those that pose a threat to the mother's life. The Hyde Amendment discriminates against those who often need abortion services the most: AFAB people who are poor, have reduced access to family planning, and experience higher rates of sexual victimization. Hyde restrictions disproportionately affect people of color, low-income individuals, rural communities, military service members, Medicaid enrollees, and prison inmates (Arnold 2014).

In 1979, Jerry Falwell (pastor, televangelist, and conservative activist) and his colleagues founded Moral Majority, a "pro-life" organization with political roots. Moral Majority bridged Evangelicalism with Republican politics to form the "Religious Right," a constituency that played a crucial role in electing Ronald Reagan president in 1980. During that presidential campaign, six million Evangelicals switched from the Democratic to the Republican Party after Reagan addressed twenty thousand Evangelicals at a Religious Roundtable meeting. As

president, Reagan's acts against abortion were largely symbolic in order to placate anti-abortion activists while managing not to upset mainstream voters. This eventually alienated anti-abortion activists throughout the 1980s, causing them to adopt a militant approach.

1983 was the beginning of the development of organizations and coalitions for women of color's health which challenged the marginalization in the U.S. women's and reproductive rights movements while representing concerns of women of color in international conferences. The partnership of these organizations focused on: abortion, birth control, teen pregnancy, prenatal care, childcare, and medical abuses against women of color. The 1980s were also a time of social budget cuts that deeply affected the movement in negative ways. The 1977 Hyde Amendment may be seen as the beginning of this period's negative effects on reproductive rights services (Morgen 2002).

The start of this shift was marked by the development of grass roots anti-abortion organizations, growing most deeply in St. Louis, home to Operation Rescue's -- a right-wing, male-dominated, absolutist, fundamentalist, youth movement -- founder, Randall Terry, among other militant Protestant fundamentalist leaders. Operation Rescue-style activism invoked a militant movement laden with street preaching, clinic insurrections, blockades, bombings, arson, murder, and other forms of violent and non-violent tactics. "Army of God" was born from the anti-abortion movement in 1982. The FBI first became involved in this form of anti-abortion activism when abortion doctor Hector Zevallos and his wife were kidnapped and released after eight days. In 1985, Justice Blackmun and his wife had a bullet tear through their apartment window. Since 1973, Blackmun had received dozens of death threats and a high volume of hate mail. Leading up to this shooting, anti-abortion violence was at an all-time high in the United States in which there had been ten abortion-related car bombings in the mid-Atlantic states. On

December 25, 1984, three abortion facilities were bombed in Pensacola, Florida. At the annual “March for Life”, held on the anniversary of the *Roe* decision, just weeks prior to the shooting at Blackmun’s home, President Reagan called for marchers to “end the national tragedy of abortion.” The shooting into Blackmun’s home was the first time that a Supreme Court justice had been the subject of a shooting investigation. Blackmun retired in 1994 after having received more than sixty thousand articles of hate mail pertaining to *Roe*. A great legacy of *Roe* was the mobilization of Christian fundamentalists in the United States, who joined forces with the Roman Catholic Church to create the first religion-based, conservative protest movement in modern United States’ history (Risen and Thomas 1998).

In 1992’s *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the Court reaffirmed that states cannot prohibit abortion prior to viability while crafting the undue burden standard for abortion (Chemerinsky and Goodwin 2017). *Casey* gave states the right to regulate first-trimester abortions. In response, states have imposed first-trimester restrictions such as mandatory counseling and waiting periods. Other restrictions include parental consent or notification requirements, mandatory ultrasounds with audio and an oral description of the ultrasound image, and mandatory provision of information about alternatives to abortion (Cianciarulo 2017).

Harassment and violence against abortion providers became an alarming trend starting with the murder of Dr. David Gunn in 1993 followed by the murder of Dr. Wayne Patterson just five months later. Dr. George Tiller was wounded that same year by an anti-abortion extremist. In 1994, Dr. James Bayard Britton and James Barrett, a clinic escort, were killed while James’ wife, June Barrett was injured in the same attack. The same year, Shannon Lowney and Leanne Nichols were killed. There was a clinic bombing in Atlanta in 1997 in which a security guard was killed and another victim was maimed. In 1998, Dr. Barnett Slepian was killed in his home

in front of his family. This is a non-exhaustive list of incidents. Although no killings were reported until 1993, anti-abortion violence began largely in the 1970s with a wide range of terrorist tactics. Violence first peaked in the 1980s when right to life groups began sidewalk counseling in front of clinics (Morgen 2002). The anti-abortion violence of this decade forced a federal response. The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act was signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994 (Risen and Thomas 1998). The FACE Act prohibited the use of force, threats, or physical obstruction to abortion clinics and those who are entering or leaving (Morgen 2002).

Regressing again, in 2007, the Supreme Court upheld the first federal law to ban abortions, criminalizing abortions in the second trimester of pregnancy (“Federal and State Bans and Restrictions on Abortion” n.d.). Two years later, Dr. George Tiller was killed by an anti-abortion activist who had ties to Operation Rescue after facing decades of harassment (“Timeline of Attacks on Abortion” n.d.).

In 2011, thirty-six states enacted 92 laws restricting safe, legal abortion -- including medically unnecessary regulations in the form of target restriction on abortion providers (TRAP) laws. That same year, Governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker, signed a budget to defund Planned Parenthood, causing five locations to close by 2013, none of which provided abortions; by 2016, another location closed. 2012 saw nineteen states enact 43 anti-abortion restrictions. In 2013, 22 states enacted 70 new abortion restrictions. Despite mass protests for reproductive rights, Texas enacted HB 2, a TRAP law that caused half of Texas’ abortion providers to close within three years. In 2014, 15 states enacted 26 abortion restrictions, with 13 states now having enacted 20-week abortion bans. In 2015, Operation Rescue affiliates released deceptive videos meant to demonize abortion and Planned Parenthood which were used by anti-abortion politicians to

justify defunding Planned Parenthood and continue pushing for abortion bans. Three people were murdered at a Colorado Planned Parenthood -- the shooter used talking points from politicians who had touted deceptive anti-abortion videos. 17 states enacted 57 new abortion bans (“Timeline of Attacks on Abortion” n.d.).

Combating regressive politics, in 2016, *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt* was decided by Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg that two provisions of Texas’ HB 2 were invalid under the undue burden test from *Casey* (Chemerinsky and Goodwin 2017). That same year, Donald Trump promised to nominate judges who would overturn *Roe* and, less than a month later, won the presidential election. The anti-abortion movement gained political power in their efforts to overturn *Roe* during Trump’s presidency as Trump effectively reshaped the federal courts, appointing more than 220 lifetime judges -- the majority conservative and against reproductive rights. 18 states enacted 50 abortion restrictions (“Timeline of Attacks on Abortion” n.d.). In an interview, candidate Trump declared that women who obtain abortions should be punished (Chemerinsky and Goodwin 2017). In 2017, Trump reinstated and expanded the global gag rule, endangering the health and wellbeing of millions of AFAB people around the world. Following Governor Kim Reynolds’ signature to defund Planned Parenthood, four Iowa locations were forced to close. Nineteen states enacted 63 abortion restrictions. In 2018, 15 states enacted 23 abortion restrictions. This same year, Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed to a seat on the Supreme Court, solidifying an anti-abortion majority. In the first three months of 2019, 16 states filed, moved, or enacted 6-week abortion bans. Since 2011, more than 430 abortion restrictions have been signed into law. 303 abortion restriction bills were filed in 47 states in 2019 -- 135 of these bills were abortion bans (“Federal and State Bans and Restrictions on Abortion” n.d.).

The following events of 2019 inspired my dedication to research the topic of feminist activism and its resilience in the face of attacks on reproductive rights and abortion access. In this year, the Trump administration issued a Title X -- a federal program that gives grants to health care providers to provide birth control and reproductive health care to under or uninsured patients -- gag rule as a means to ban providers from informing patients on how to safely access abortion (“Timeline of Attacks on Abortion” n.d.). In hopes to defund Planned Parenthood, Title X patients would also not be able to obtain birth control through Planned Parenthood. Trump openly spread misinformation about abortion, causing widespread outrage against safe, legal abortion. There were 37 new restrictions on abortion this year (“Timeline of Attacks on Abortion” n.d.). The states that enacted the abortion bans of 2019 include: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Mississippi, North Dakota, Ohio, Tennessee, and Utah. Georgia and Missouri enacted 6-week abortion bans. Alabama enacted a near-total ban on abortion, the most extreme and with no exceptions for rape or incest (“The State of Emergency for Women’s Health” n.d.).

While the cultural and political intuitions described above are integral players in the actualization of reproductive rights, additional factors contribute to the barriers AFAB people face in abortion-care access. Great existing limitations to abortion access also include a lack of preventative measures and accessibility to reproductive healthcare. Inadequate measures for preventing pregnancy position AFAB individuals precariously as being much more likely to need abortion-care. Comprehensive sex education and accessible birth control methods are vital to the reproductive justice conversation. Conscience or religion-based restrictions on abortion are exacerbated in the United States by a lack of access to contraception and sex education. Many prominent anti-abortion groups also oppose sex before marriage, contraception, and

comprehensive sex education. They and the lawmakers whom they support seek to defund Planned Parenthood and promote abstinence-only sex education. Several states explicitly allow pharmacists to refuse to dispense medication on religious or moral grounds. Several other states have broad refusal clauses that could be interpreted as giving pharmacists the right to refuse to dispense contraception on religious or moral grounds. There are also federal statutes stating the same: if religious beliefs or moral convictions conflict, the provider does not have to participate in the federally funded program.

Only half of U.S. states mandate sex education. 36 states allow parents to remove their children from sex education classes. Only thirteen states require that the information provided in sex education classes be medically accurate. 26 states require that abstinence be stressed, often through highly restrictive programs that ignore or often actively denigrate the effectiveness of contraceptives and safer-sex behaviors. To the extent that limitations on access to contraception and effective sex education are the result of religious and moral beliefs about proper sexuality, the goal appears to be to coerce adherence to those religious and moral beliefs, even when doing so increases the chances of unwanted pregnancies, and consequently, abortions. When lack of access to pregnancy prevention methods exists alongside lack of access to abortion, the result is coerced childbearing (Cianciarulo 2017). If *Roe* is overturned, lessons from the era preceding that decision underscore the broad harms AFAB people will encounter, particularly because 49% of pregnancies in the United States are unintended. In traditionally conservative states, the rates of unintended pregnancies are even higher: 54% in Texas, 55% in Alabama and Arkansas, 60% in Louisiana, and 62% in Mississippi, among others. For AFAB people aged 20–24, 64% of pregnancies are unintended in the United States, and yet there has not been national progress in reducing unintended pregnancies since 2001 (Chemerinsky and Goodwin 2017). Patients seeking

abortion-care generally must physically go to the abortion provider multiple times for most/many surgical or medication abortions. This is an accessibility issue, as medication abortion could be easily mailed to individuals and multiple visits to a healthcare center can be financially difficult for many (Luthra 1993). Because the Hyde Amendment prohibits individuals from using federally funded Medicaid for abortion access, it disproportionately affects low-income AFAB people, particularly of color and in rural communities. If a pregnant person lives in a state with restrictive abortion laws and lacks insurance coverage, they may be forced to pay up to \$2,000 out of pocket, not including the costs of transportation or lodging if they must travel hundreds of miles to the nearest abortion provider. Currently, one in six AFAB people are on Medicaid insurance. Due to the Hyde Amendment and restrictive state policies, approximately one in four AFAB people denied abortion funding through Medicaid carry unintended pregnancies to full term. Low-income AFAB people who are denied abortion access are more likely to fall deeper into poverty (Matos 2018).

Barriers to abortion access or severe legislation against abortion creates the grounds for a large number of illegal abortions. The illegal abortion procedures are performed, in almost all circumstances, by unqualified persons, in unhealthy conditions, often leading to severe injuries of the pregnant person or even to their death. Yet, history has proved that abortion has been a constant practice in human society, no matter how severe the legislation on abortion has been (Franç 2014).

Feminist Activism and Reproductive Justice

Feminism in the United States widely self-conceptualized and described in four waves. The first wave had gained momentum by 1913 and focused on political and civil rights, including suffrage. When the Nineteenth Amendment passed, the movement declared success,

thus marginalizing Black women who still had to wait another 45 years until the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965.

In the early 1960s, the feminist movement emerged in the state apparatus following President Kennedy's establishment of a national Commission on the Status of Women. As a result, organizations came of this as well, including the National Organization of Women (Morgen 2002). The second wave began in the late-1960s and focused on sexual and reproductive rights and passing the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. White feminism dominated the goals, ideologies, and strategies of this wave, as well (Lawrence 2017). While mainstream second wave feminists fought for anti-discrimination policies in the workplace and abortion rights, their platforms often ignored the experiences of low-income women, transgender and gender non-conforming people, women of color, and disabled women. The legacy of this erasure is embedded in the limits of abortion access today (Matos 2018).

Third wave feminism began in the 1990s and broke boundaries posed by previous waves, establishing an empowerment-based, intersectional framework for the movement while working to overcome limited notions of gender (Lawrence 2017). The term "intersectionality" was originally coined by lawyer and theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to explain how Black women experience compounded violence based on their race and gender. Crenshaw defines intersectionality as "a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times, that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things." Intersectionality has evolved into an analytical framework for addressing the invisibility of marginalized groups. The ongoing debate over

abortion in the United States exemplifies the consequences of policy that fails to be intersectional (Matos 2018).

Fourth wave feminism began in the late-2000s and is contemporary and evolving, working to make intersectional feminism an inclusive, public discourse accessible to all rather than an academic theory detached from practice. Technology and social media have shaped the strategies of advocacy and interaction. Feminism is activism that challenges the way in which society values and constrains individuals based on their gender identity and therefore manifests in many ways (Lawrence 2017).

Many second wave activists were also mobilized by the passage of the Hyde Amendment. These activists shared the agenda and understanding of reproductive rights put forward by AFAB people of color. They formed new organizations to resist Hyde and reject the population control politics that were present in public policy and the pro-choice movement. By adopting the language of reproductive rights, they distinguished themselves from pro-choice politics in their views on how best to build a large movement, highlighting the need for grassroots activism, public education, organizing demonstrations, and disseminating radical analyses. With President Clinton in office, who aligned with being pro-choice, the attacks on abortion access escalated, including the murders of practitioners and clinic workers, and ongoing criminal assaults on abortion services. In response, for the first time since *Roe*, the focus of abortion rights activism shifted to access. Groups who had been advocating to prioritize access were joined by new organizations working to address all aspects of the problem including supporting providers and increasing their numbers, countering TRAP laws, advocating for integration of abortion into medical and nursing school curricula, providing direct financial assistance to AFAB people needing abortions, and advocating to restore public funding for

abortion. Although maternal morbidity and mortality from legal abortion is so low it obscures its importance as a public health issue, debates about excluding abortion and contraceptive coverage from the Affordable Care Act highlight the need to recapture this ground. Public health professionals have played a historic role in this battle. After *Roe*, the American Public Health Association was among a handful of national medical organizations to affirm its support for legal abortion. Continuing to promote advocacy with the health professions is a crucial activist strategy. The public health field has also been a clear voice for evidence-based public policy. Over the years, the antiabortion movement has increasingly moved away from grounding its claims in established science. Organizations dedicated to producing legitimate research and analysis and dispelling myths that masquerade as science play a critical role as activists rely heavily on this work (Fried 2013).

The WHO define reproductive rights as “the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion, and violence, as expressed in human rights documents” (Report of the International Conference on Population and Development [ICPD], 1994). The definition is an ambitious one that is not readily achievable for many around the world, including many Americans (Chrisler 2014). An important manifestation and extension of intersectionality came out of the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development where, Black women, including SisterSong co-founder Loretta Ross, coined the term “reproductive justice” (Matos 2018). Reproductive justice situates activism for reproductive rights within the broader social justice movement, which is concerned with such issues as human rights, labor practices

and conditions, peace, prejudice and discrimination, educational equity, poverty, and health and health-care disparities, all of which are fundamental to the achievement of reproductive justice. Another benefit to the use of the term is its different emphasis on individual rights and the government's role. Reproductive rights are based on the principle of negative rights, whereas reproductive justice can be seen as based on positive rights. Nearly 90% of counties in the United States have no clinics or hospitals that provide abortion services, and 56% of American AFAB people live in the 27 states with abortion restrictions so severe they are termed "hostile" to AFAB people's rights. In such cases, reproductive rights remain, but reproductive justice is needed (Chrisler 2014).

Reproductive justice prioritizes the leadership of marginalized communities and intentionally combines reproductive health with broader economic and social justice causes. Increasingly, advocates are working with lawmakers to push for policy based on intersectional, community-driven frameworks like reproductive justice. Effective collaboration between lawmakers and community advocates further underscores that the responsibility of intersectional policy making should not fall solely on marginalized communities (Matos 2018). Reproductive justice has breathed new life into the movement and is becoming the dominant framework. Placing reproductive rights in the struggle for social justice and human rights has global resonance and it is a compelling, expansive, and inclusive vision for US activists (Fried 2013). Outside of North America, reproductive justice also pertains to child marriage, genital mutilation, and other issues that affect the lives of AFAB people across the globe (Reinhardt-Simpson 2016) including biopolitics around family planning like forced sterilization, sex preference, and choosing how many children to bear.

Anthropological and Theoretical Perspectives

Anthropologists were participants in the social movements of the 1960s, although social science theorizing did not reflect much of this participation as collective action remained on the margins of scientific discourse. This may be due to trends in the field which situated researchers to study the “Other” or focus heavily on the everyday rather than make theoretical generalizations about social movements with many moving parts. Nevertheless, within the emerging frame of New Social Movements (NSM), social movements can be seen as having three major parts: actors’ recognition of commonalities and shared identities, objectives, and understandings; adversarial relations with opponents who claim the same goods or values; and actions that exceed the tolerance limits of a social system, thus applying pressure for change.

This research project falls into the category of anthropology that researches a movement that resonates with my convictions and commitments: the feminist movement. As such, it is important to highlight the deficit of research conducted on right-wing and conservative movements in social science, especially since this project touches on the discourse between the feminist and anti-abortion movements (Edelman 2001).

Ethnographic research on social movements has been significant despite its minimal theorization in the academic sphere. Edelman warns, however, that ethnography alone is not sufficient for the holistic study of social movements, nor does it prevent research from the common overidentification with the movements studied. This commitment of the scholar-activist may be unproblematic, however, as this very identification and sympathy for the social issues is often what permits anthropologists’ access to activist interlocutors (Edelman 2001).

Sandra Morgen’s anthropological research and literature on the feminist activism within the women’s health movement in the United States are paramount contributions. Morgen’s perspective relies heavily on the voices of women primarily through extensive interviewing,

fieldwork and primary documents, surveys, and scholarly literature reviews. In Morgen's application of social movements, she often refers to the realization of imagined change, highlighting the need for the narrative around feminist activism as a means for real social change. This literature discusses, in feminist revolutionary fashion, the multiple localities and local beginnings of the feminist movement as a means to disengage with a monolithic view of the movement or normative history. Foundational stories, instead, create a collective history of many experiences emerging simultaneously. The use of narrative and voice allows for remembering and emphasizes the subjective truths of those doing and experiencing the work of the feminist movement. As Morgen (2002) writes, "Foundational stories are told in social movements for the same reasons that families and nations tell stories about themselves -- to construct a history with roots to a present that is shared and hopes for a future in which individuals have a common stake." Morgen (2002) refers to this as the "discursive process of movement making."

Empowerment and intersectionality are immensely important to this work in feminist anthropology, as is the integral work of black AFAB people in the civil and women's rights movements (Morgen 2002). Black AFAB people made significant contributions to the reproductive freedom movement while simultaneously fighting the racism embedded in it at the time. Latinx, Native Americans, and Asians also contributed in vital ways that may not be touched upon in the normative telling of history. The consciousness-raising approach of the feminist movement is highlighted as this scholarship problematizes and, simultaneously, celebrates the need for diversity and various other goals of the movement and its processes of working toward ever-evolving goals of inclusion and betterment. It is this kind of feminist

anthropology that straddles scholarship and activism and allows us to both celebrate achievements and shed light on the long road ahead (Morgen 2002).

Feminism works to question and problematize structures based in dominant patriarchal forces. This pushback against oppressive forces is reminiscent of decolonial efforts in its work to undermine and reclaim power from, as Donna Haraway has referred to as, the white capitalist patriarchal framework. The legitimate study of affect or feelings and emotion supports these activist efforts. Ethnographic study highlighting voice, or a plurality of voices, must involve aspects of feeling in effort to convey understandings of experience. “Feelings, ideas, and actions together constitute experience and are interwoven in their construction and impact. To exclude the analysis of feelings from an analysis of experience distorts its very essence and inevitably diminishes the power of the analysis to depict the fullness of human experience” (Morgen 1983).

Feminist anthropology also reclaims the importance of the study of affect from its normative disciplines such as psychology and its related fields. Studies of social movements have historically lacked consideration of feelings in favor of analysis of thought and action. “This characteristic of social science is rooted in an epistemological framework which dichotomizes realms of experience so that thought is opposed to feeling, objectivity to subjectivity, and rationality to emotionality,” as Morgen (1983), writes. “These dualisms are reinforced by a gender ideology which polarizes male and female.” Relevant activist efforts would argue for a questioning and reconceptualization of these tacitly accepted assumptions. Academic and non-academic feminists have rejected these binaries. A critical step in going beyond models which neglect affect in social science is to recognize that feelings are also influenced by social dynamics, thus having a social impact. This can benefit analyses by informing them with meaning and action in order to better understand human experience. This

harkens back to the feminist principle “the personal is political” and supports emotions as a viable source of knowledge (Morgen 1983).

To wit, anthropological research on and with art, as both an object and method of study, shows how affect allows social science to approach, intuit, and engage in new imaginings for a world of progress. Poetry and art, for example, are forces for creating political imaginaries to be actualized beyond current states of hegemony and oppression. “Key to this understanding is that imaginings are reconstituted by not being limited to rational minds but rather by encompassing the generated material in social relations, affects, and their contingent emotional/social investments” (Agathangelou and Killian 2006). This has the power to encourage future realities of connection and solidarity through highlighting voice by means of affect (Agathangelou and Killian 2006).

I build upon each of these streams of literature as the foundation for my research project. Drawing upon feminist anthropology and in reverence of decolonial goals, I now turn to my research into the feminist movement through the aperture of the Feminist Majority Foundation in Los Angeles, California. My experiences, and the experiences of powerful activists I encountered and worked with, are the basis of my ethnographic research.

Chapter Two: Research Design, Sites, and Methods - Los Angeles, California

In February and March of 2020, I conducted feminist ethnographic research at the Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF) at their west coast office in Los Angeles, California, located in Beverly Hills. In this chapter, I provide an overview of FMF, the prolific work they do as a feminist non-profit working toward equality, and my research methods. Through FMF, I also conducted research by means of their National Clinic Access Project (NCAP), which took place as an online, virtual research site. The final site at which I conducted research is FPA Women's Health, a clinic in Downey, California, as a clinic escort through L.A. For Choice, a volunteer clinic escort group.

This chapter provides detailed information about my methods and my approach to this research, including my deep and ongoing connections with my research sites. Through qualitative feminist anthropological methods and participatory action research (PAR) praxis, I sought to deepen my understanding of feminist activism pertaining to contemporary attacks on reproductive rights in the United States while simultaneously collaborating with participants in organizational activism as well as this research project. The Feminist Majority Foundation in Los Angeles, California served as my starting point and the aperture through which I came into contact with the other sites: NCAP and FPA Women's Health with L.A. For Choice. At these sites, I practiced the traditional ethnographic methods of participant-observation and interviews, but I also explored photography, poetry, and art forms of ethnographic elicitation. In all cases, my research followed my institutional review board (IRB) approved protocol, which included written consent from each participant.

Research Design

The route to this research was not a linear one. Originally, I had plans to study reproductive rights activism in Peru because I had traveled to Peru during my undergraduate studies and had some connections there and was inspired by those experiences. I was a first-year student and had just received the approval for my research proposal and funding when I decided to change my topic.

Hundreds of abortion restrictions were introduced in the early months of 2019 in the United States. I felt infuriated, confused, and scared. I was emotional about what was going on in my home country to the extent that I found it difficult to focus on the reproductive rights issues in Peru, not because their rights are any less important, but simply because I felt at that time more than ever before how very personal the political truly is. I recognized that I had the choice to channel this intense energy I felt into productive action. I had an academic degree to complete, and reproductive justice in the United States called for all hands on deck. I stopped reaching out to potential research participants in Peru and redirected that same effort toward potential participants all over the United States. FMF offered me an internship in which they would support my research endeavors, seamlessly meeting my desire for PAR.

Research Sites

Feminist Majority Foundation

I arrived at the Feminist Majority Foundation today at 10:00 am. It was a surprisingly quick and pleasant drive from my friend's apartment where I was staying for the duration of my fieldwork just fifteen minutes away but still in the Beverly Hills neighborhood. After parking in the alley-lot, I went through two buzzers to enter the back of the building. I introduced myself to the receptionist at the front desk and spent a short wait in the plush seats of the waiting area decorated with Ms. Magazine publications which came directly from the other half of the large, open floor planned office which also housed Ms. Magazine. Moments later, Jess, who I had been corresponding with via email up until this point, warmly welcomed me to FMF and offered me a tour of the space before my internship training began. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

With the emergence of the third wave of feminism, FMF was founded in 1987 by Eleanor Smeal (President), Peg Yorkin (Chair of the Board), Katherine Spillar (Executive Director), Toni Carabillo, and Judith Meuli with the goal to be “a cutting-edge organization dedicated to women’s equality, reproductive health, and non-violence” (“Feminist Majority Foundation” n.d.). The name *Feminist Majority Foundation* is meant to be a consciousness-raiser and was inspired by a 1986 Newsweek/Gallup opinion poll which showed that a 56% majority of women in the United States identified themselves as feminists. The organization’s definition of feminism is: “the policy, practice or advocacy of political, economic, and social equality for women” (“Feminist Majority Foundation” n.d.). FMF works to empower AFAB people and AMAB women and genderqueer people politically, economically, and socially while providing young feminists with tools for future leadership in carrying the feminist movement in the United States. Their activism methods include research and public policy development, public education programs, grassroots organizing projects, leadership training and development programs, and the participation in and organization of forums on issues of equality and empowerment. FMF’s sister organizations include: Feminist Majority, Feminist Campus, Girls Learn International (GLI), and Ms. Magazine. FMF’s mission statement is as follows:

The Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF) was created to develop bold, new strategies and programs to advance women’s equality, non-violence, economic development, and, most importantly, empowerment of women and girls in all sectors of society. All programs of the FMF endeavor to include a global perspective and activities to promote leadership development, especially among young women. Along with reproductive rights and access to reproductive technology, the FMF’s programs have focused on the empowerment of women in law, business, medicine, academia, sports, and the Internet. (“Feminist Majority Foundation” n.d.)

My ticket into doing research at FMF was through an internship. I spent months reaching out to potential participants over the course of the summer and autumn of 2019. Once I discovered FMF, I reached out to the Internship Coordinator for their Los Angeles office about

my graduate studies and research project with hopes to potentially work with FMF for this project. She showed such kindness, support, and interest in my project and suggested that I fill out an internship application as this would offer me the greatest opportunity for insight into the organization. The internship timeframe happened to align perfectly with my research timeline. The Internship Coordinator approved of and agreed to my Participant Consent Form, and we developed a plan for how I would perform my intern role while simultaneously conducting research for this thesis. This internship was the greatest portion of my participant-observation.

National Clinic Access Project

FMF has many projects, campaigns, and methods in the name of advocacy for equality. Interns have the opportunity to focus a large portion of their intern work on one of the many projects. I chose to learn about and contribute to FMF's National Clinic Access Project (NCAP) as it most directly pertained to my thesis topic. My work with NCAP was done through online research and reporting.

Through the mobilization of pro-choice volunteers, the NCAP was born in 1989 as a direct response to the anti-abortion violence when Operation Rescue threatened to turn Los Angeles into an "abortion-free city" and spent over three years working to blockade and close clinics. The Project assists independent clinics and physicians as well as affiliated clinics, whether non-profit or for-profit. Nationwide, NCAP works to reduce anti-abortion violence, keep abortion care personnel and patients safe, keep clinics open and running, and end anti-abortion extremism. In doing so, the Project provides national emergency response teams for clinic survival assistance following attacks on clinics, security assessments and training on-site, and litigation strategy and assistance. The most extensive measure of anti-abortion violence and trends in the United States is carried out through NCAP's research and National Clinic Violence

Survey. This data is used most by law enforcement through a national briefing project and the media for public education. This research was used for policy analysis in the development of the FACE Act, signed into law in 1994. (“Feminist Majority Foundation” n.d.)

L.A. For Choice and FPA Women’s Health, Downey, California

“We got lucky today,” another, veteran of many years, volunteer informed me as we walked up to switch high-visibility vests with “PRO-CHOICE” printed on them with the previous shift of L.A. For Choice volunteers. There were only two anti-choice protesters on the sidewalk on this Sunday in front of FPA Women’s Health. One was a woman with a handful of miniature Bibles to hand out to passersby and patients with a Rosary hanging off her wrist. She had a gentle demeanor and prayed under her breath as our volunteer briefing continued. The male anti-abortion protester, however, could be heard blocks away yelling a nonsensical soliloquy about baby murder, Black Lives Matter, and hellacious threats for the consequences of sins performed at the establishment he was harassing. Upon closer inspection, the tattered handheld banner he touted had an image of what was meant to represent a bloody aborted fetus. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

After learning about my research project, one of the intern supervisors at FMF who I had the pleasure to work with daily provided me with information about her volunteer work as a clinic escort with L.A. For Choice at a clinic that is often bombarded with anti-abortion protesters. Another intern, who I became good friends with during my time at FMF, and I would drive to Downey on Sundays to volunteer as clinic escorts to act as a physical, and potentially verbal and emotional, barriers between patients entering FPA Women’s Health in Downey, California and the anti-abortion protesters on the sidewalk just feet away from the clinic entrance.

L.A. For Choice, founded in 2009, came to fruition in response to the assassination of Dr. George Tiller. The group’s first name was 40 Days for Choice, a play on words retorting the nationwide anti-choice campaign 40 Days of Life (a 40 day fasted prayer vigil held outside of abortion care providers during Lent and in the fall) which biannually targets clinics with intensified harassment tactics. When it became clear just how persistent the harassment was year-round, the organization changed its name to the current title: L.A. For Choice. Their goal is

to “provide a friendly face and supportive voice to those seeking reproductive health care in Los Angeles” each weekend (“L.A. for CHOICE” n.d.). Their mission statement is as follows:

Volunteer escorting is an important way to take a peaceful, proactive stance against anti-choice activism that targets providers and patients of reproductive health services. L.A. for Choice is dedicated to providing patients in Los Angeles with friendly faces, supportive voices and protection from aggressive anti-choice activists. (“L.A. for CHOICE” n.d.)

About a half hour drive away from Beverly Hills, FPA Women’s Health in Downey, California was where I would meet with other L.A. For Choice volunteers on Sundays to escort patients from the clinic’s parking lot to the clinic entrance as anti-abortion protesters attempted to provide sidewalk counseling, yell at, and scare patients and community members just feet away from the clinic entrance.

Family Planning Associates Medical Group, now FPA Women’s Health, began in 1969 to provide women with medical care and is currently the largest independent family planning service network in the United States. There are multiple locations in Los Angeles County and within California offering comprehensive services for family planning. Their featured services include abortion, annual exams, birth control, STI testing, cervical cancer screenings, IUD insertions, Telehealth, and behavioral health (“FPA Women’s Health: Women’s Health: Los Angeles County and Other Regions across California” n.d.)

Research Methodology

Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR)

PAR is based on collaborative and ethical research methods and efforts for the co-creation of knowledge as a democratized method of research. PAR can be practiced on a continuum of participation intensity. Low intensity participation efforts involve the sharing of information in the form of one-way communication from the researcher; the fifth and highest intensity being empowerment in the form of exchanges with transfer of decision power (Graef

and Sieber 2018). PAR is an efficient framework for shedding light on the rationale, experiences, and priorities of all engaged in confronting a challenge, in this case feminist goals for reproductive justice. PAR hinges on transformative potential in social issues. Ideally, PAR lends itself to engagement in critique; an inclusive approach to research; and the utilization of hopeful language to reimagine social possibilities. This is done by bringing together means of education, inquiry, and action to promote emancipatory, locally relevant, co-produced knowledge (Dutta 2017).

Feminist methods are deeply related to feminist theory and draw upon those proponents in action during research. The theory and methodology is interdisciplinary in nature, considering patterns of meaning while critically questioning totalizing, inherently colonial, theories and assumptions. Feminist anthropology critiques anthropological practice that can impose reductionist or harmful views by valuing pluralistic ontologies and epistemologies to develop a foundation of partial perspectives from situated knowledges (Haraway 1988). This takes positionality and implications of research into ethical consideration. As a reflexive methodology, feminist methods strive to make human agency the shaping force of research. Such research lends itself to calls for action as transformative policy changes. Feminist methods in anthropology are meant to be community-based and situated in participatory action.

FPAR is a research methodology that recognizes situated knowledges, or perspectives, in current global women's movements as they intersect with third wave feminism. Feminist epistemology of multiple situated knowledges as research methodology is congruent with this area of social movement research as a living, embodied practice that must be adapted to in terms of qualitative research, as well (Araiza Díaz and García 2017). Methodology inspired by feminist philosophies are often meant to amplify the context from which perspectives are shared in order

to critically question claims to objectivity and universality often found in the sciences and thus works to support decolonization efforts. PAR is compatible with reflexive feminist research methodology to create FPAR (Di Nella, Samaranch and Monera 2014).

Reflexivity & Positionality

In alignment with Donna Haraway's framework of situated knowledge providing a partial perspective that is context-specific, rather than research that makes universal claims of detached neutrality, I must highlight my own positionality from which I reflexively carried out this research and analysis (Haraway 1988).

The conduct and analysis of this research and thesis are produced through the lens of my perspective. Although collaboration -- the intermixing of subjectivities and efforts -- is a pillar of this study, it is skewed mostly by my subjective vision. The presentation of information from other sources in this thesis is also influenced by my position in the world and my reflexive process, as well as that of those who have provided insight used in this final thesis. As such, positionality and reflexivity are embedded throughout this thesis. Responsible research must admit and continually remind us all that position, perspective, and context cannot be separated from the production of knowledge. Inspired by the ongoing discourse of reflexivity and positionality, I will present some background information about myself in order to better contextualize the perspective from which this research comes as a means for readers to be aware of how this work may be influenced. Just as reflexivity is an ongoing process within research and analysis, positionality is also an ongoing process as we continuously evolve in our understanding of ourselves and the world.

At the time of this research in 2020, I am a 24-year-old white woman from Washington state, born and raised in the United States. I grew up in a bilingual, bicultural home environment

as my mother is a Hungarian immigrant. This coupled with the fact that my maternal grandfather, who was very present in my childhood prior to his passing, was a professor of sociology and linguist who had worked for UNESCO, surely influenced my interest in and pursuit of cultural anthropology. Although my parents are politically liberal and had both come to avoid the institution of religion based on personal accounts, they encouraged me to develop my own personal beliefs in religion and beyond. I am grateful that they continue to support my personal development on my own terms. In the writing of this thesis, I identify as a politically liberal, queer, agnostic pro-abortion feminist. I am pro-choice, as well, but as a reproductive justice advocate, I acknowledge that reproductive choices are rarely made in a vacuum and are influenced by many other factors in a person's life; abortion is often a necessary medical procedure for the well-being of those who undergo it and ought to be normalized in all areas of discourse. My politics support decolonial efforts as I continue to grapple with my place in decolonial work as a white scholar of anthropology, which is affiliated deeply with colonization, on stolen Lummi Nation land. Much of the privilege afforded to me is based on the oppressive forces of colonization; as such, I acknowledge that decolonization requires that I must be willing to give up this privilege. I am a learner in my ongoing education of decolonization and see this as a vital aspect of my feminist scholar-activism.

During my fieldwork, I resided in Beverly Hills. I have had a couple of my close childhood friends move from Mukilteo, Washington, where I grew up, to Los Angeles, California to pursue their career goals. When I found out I would be conducting my field research in Beverly Hills, I reached out to them to see if they had any ideas for where I might be able to stay for that time. Timing was on my side when one of my friends said she had a roommate who had just left, leaving an opening for me to move in for a couple of months. When

the time came for me to make my way down the west coast, I drove my car from Mukilteo to Los Angeles, accompanied by one of my best friends. I mention this network of support who directly helped me in these moments perhaps to underscore that I have been deeply supported by those I hold dear in my life, and this may have a lot to do with my bias toward feminism, empowerment, and advocating for what I believe is just.

Participant-Observation

Participant-observation is beholden to my positionality and reflexive process not only in my analysis of the data procured from this method, but the procurement itself. Here I discuss my account of participant-observation for this study. Participant-observation is a qualitative method which is conducted by taking part in everyday activities and building relationships in order to gain tacit and explicit knowledge. This method is highly situational and open-ended. The researcher balances reflexive participation with observation while acting as the subjective research tool.

The primary vehicle of this research project was my internship at FMF. Through this, I conducted the majority of my participant-observation. NCAP and L.A. For Choice escorting were also spaces in which I utilized this method. Throughout the duration of my fieldwork, I went to my internship Monday through Friday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Every so often, the other interns and I would attend events after work or on the weekends within the Los Angeles non-profit or activism realms. Working as an unpaid student intern at FMF is one of the ways I was also able to fulfill an aspect of my commitment to following through with PAR. Most days consisted of extensive research and writing assignments either for local political support, administrative work, and plenty of in-office discourse. Another large portion of my internship was spent on NCAP, researching current demographics and tactics of anti-abortion groups and

updating or creating documents to help keep track of their work. On Sundays, another intern, Penelope, and I would drive to Downey, California and volunteer as clinic escorts with L.A. For Choice at FPA Women's Health. This work consisted of providing a physical barrier between the anti-abortion demonstrators, often verbally shaming or yelling fearmongering rants, and the clinic patients. As volunteers, we would help usher cars to the parking lot located behind the clinic and offer patients for us to escort them to the clinic entry. We always explained that we were with the clinic in order to clarify that we were not a part of an anti-choice group -- even though all volunteers wore vests that said "PRO-CHOICE" during any given shift, the anti-choice protest could often be distracting and a source of great discomfort. Similar to my internship, this volunteer work utilized PAR pillars in activism and combined it with my data collection. All observations were documented by taking daily field notes with a pen and journal or in the Notes app on my iPhone in the field, or as soon as possible, and immediately expanding field notes, along with accounts of participation.

My original internship timeline, which constituted my participant-observation timeline, was throughout the months of February and March of 2020. February 3, 2020 was the first day of my internship at FMF. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 and subsequent pandemic, March 16, 2020 was my last day physically attending my internship at the office.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with four participants. Each of the participants were people I worked with at FMF: one is an employee and the other three were interns at the same time that I was interning. The four individuals I interviewed were all people I spent most of my time with and felt connections with. It was more important to me to go deep than wide in my interviews. What I mean by this, is that I prioritized friendship, intimacy, and trust rather than a

large sample size of interview participants. Each of these interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded, with participants' approval, on the EasyAudioRecorderLite application I had downloaded onto my laptop. This was a pivot from my original plan to do face-to-face interviews, as I had not conducted any interviews prior to my last days in California. I reflexively developed my interview questions based on my participant-observation field notes and planned to interview participants in the last days of my internship. The participants have each been given names of their choosing, other than their own for anonymity in this thesis. Each interview took between 30 and 45 minutes. Participants were welcomed to skip any question that they were not comfortable answering. After the interviews were transcribed, I emailed the interviewees drafts of their interviews to look over and edit to ensure transparency and respectful collaborative efforts were met.

Artistic Expression Exercises: Photography, Poetry, and Art Reflection

In addition to my more traditional anthropological research methods of participant-observation and interviewing, I also enacted three art-based, ultra-qualitative, methods designed to reach deeper levels of affect and expression that might be overlooked in traditional qualitative research methods. "Forms of art," as Moser (2003) says "allow creative movement in terms of emotional healing while simultaneously bringing awareness to political issues in the form of protest. Art creates a forum for bearing witness to issues and thus enhancing notions of affective understanding. Artistic forms of protest bear with them aspects of hope and healing." I use the term *ultra-qualitative* to intensify the impressions of qualitative data, referring to the immeasurables of phenomenon, into the affective and emotive. This is meant to offer data that goes beyond normative descriptions found in narrative-style observations of accounts or what one might feel comfortable sharing with another person in an on-the-spot setting of an interview

by offering participants, and not just the researcher, to join me in delving into aspects of reflexive work. In alignment with a feminist research approach, experience and feeling provide greater opportunities to connect to ourselves and the world around us. According to poet Audre Lorde, acknowledging these depths within ourselves and others offers us the power to challenge dominant conceptions of truth, subverting the commonly held idea that reason alone is a sufficient modality for understanding the social, cultural, and political forces that shape so much of our experience. Art permits us to delve into the feelings supporting actions, while better imagining and advocating for new possibilities.

These three methods included: a photography exercise, a poetry exercise, and an art reflection exercise. One participant took photos that represented their own perspectives on feminist goals/reproductive justice/what feminist activism means to them and wrote short descriptions for each of their photos. The medium for photography was their cell phone and the final exercise was sent to me via email. One participant wrote a single piece of free verse poetry about their feelings and experiences pertaining to reproductive rights. The final poetry piece was sent to me via email. In the *Discussion of Findings* chapter, I share a short reflection as to how these pieces provided by participants represent or evoke sentiments related to the feminist movement from my perspective. No prior knowledge or mastery of these creative, participant-produced data types were necessary for participation.

Limitations

The COVID-19 pandemic quarantine began two weeks prior to the original end date of my internship. This immense event caused me to lose two weeks of participant-observation, including upcoming events planned at that time. I resorted to conducting the rest of my research methods virtually and over the phone. Although technology allowed for the connections

necessary to complete the study, I would have preferred face-to-face interactions and more participant-observation data to analyze.

Conclusion

Each of these sites serve individuals in working tirelessly to ascertain reproductive rights. My experiences through and with FMF, NCAP, and L.A. For Choice at FPA Women's Health set the stage for this research project. I am grateful to have carried out and collaborated in my research with the participants in these spaces. In the next chapter, I present my interpretation of what happened in my research and various implications of the data I collected through my experience and the participation of my fellow feminist activists.

Chapter Three: Discussion of Findings

Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, it's unlikely you will step up and take responsibility for making it so. If you assume that there is no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope. If you assume that there is an instinct for freedom, that there are opportunities to change things, then there is a possibility that you can contribute to making a better world. - Noam Chomsky

Reproductive justice is a warzone of colliding movements. It is a feminist praxis as a politics of hope. And it is an art, an alchemical force within the feminist movement. It is each at once.

These perspectives on reproductive justice are not mutually exclusive, but combined they provide a more three-dimensional account of the issue at hand. What they have in common is an appreciation of the fact that feminism no single ethos or set of principles. It is a contentious and emerging praxis, one that spans a politics of hope and encourages a practice that simultaneously unsettles and constructs new reality, opening up new spaces of possibility and praxis. I present my data as a discussion of findings reflecting a narrative style with changed names for privacy of each participant or person mentioned.

Warzone of Movements

*A smiling, sleek-looking woman approached me and introduced herself as Jess, FMF's Internship Coordinator with whom I had been corresponding via email ever since my initial participant recruitment inquiry. She led me to my desk in a shared cubicle area and introduced me to Elsa, Amelia, Penelope (all college interns), and Carmen (the other Intern Supervisor), all of whom I would be working with daily for the next couple of months. My desk area was equipped with a folder of paperwork for the internship and a copy of Ms. Magazine Fall 2019 issue with the headline: "gag rule (n.) A dangerous Trump-Pence policy **mandating that medical providers withhold information from women** about abortion." I could hardly contain my gratitude and excitement. This is the work that feels purposeful to me. I felt motivated and eager to learn from and join FMF's fight. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)*



Figure 1: Variety of Ms. Magazine covers displayed in the FMF/Ms. lobby (photo credit: Tuttle, Nicolette)

Discursive disagreements on biopolitical standards have shifted the division of the United States due to an intensification of the conflictive coexistence between growing secularity and militant right-wing religious orthodoxy. These visions of society contest over notions of truth, rights, and narratives of nationhood. The abortion debate is emblematic of this clash of perspectives (Maier 2018). The feminist and anti-choice movements are caught in a dance of dissonance: feminist progress elicits the conservative movement to mobilize met by the feminist movement mobilizing in response (Banaszak and Ondercin 2016). Although the terms “social movement” and “countermovement” do not always specify political alignments, commonly and in this study, the term “countermovement” indicates a reactionary movement, along dominant and oppressive forces whereas “social movement” refers to progressive movements of emancipation (Blais and Dupuis-Déri 2012). The current fight over reproductive rights between the pro-choice (feminist) social movement and anti-choice countermovement plays out in a variety of national arenas.

Of course, there are countless perspectives within the continuum that connect these two polarities that this research discusses. There are Christians who support reproductive justice and

those who pray outside of execution centers carrying out the death penalties charged to incarcerated people; similarly, there are non-religious folks who align more with pro-life views on abortion, and so on. Through this research, I had access to how this collision of movements played out in the early months of 2020 through two main spaces: online through the lens of FMF's National Clinic Access Project (NCAP) and FPA Women's Health in Downey, California through L.A. For Choice clinic escort volunteer work. This data was procured via participant-observation. In discussing the interaction of these opposing movements, I examine the seduction and self-formation process of the anti-choice countermovement as hegemonic constructions of rhetoric and logical fallacies grounded in white supremacist masculinity.

A large portion of my internship at FMF focused on the NCAP by means of online research and reporting. My onboarding process for the project began by meeting with the head of the NCAP at FMF. I was given background information on the conception of NCAP and some major events leading up to the present. After starting in 1989, in response to anti-abortion violence from the anti-choice group Operation Rescue, NCAP has faced many other anti-choice groups and independent violent individuals in order to protect accessible reproductive healthcare. Prior to the FACE Act of 1994, which prohibited the use of obstruction of any kind to abortion clinics and those who are entering or leaving, anti-choicers would often blockade clinics by rushing entrance doors, chaining themselves to cars or other objects, and go limp when under arrest. This was occurring across the United States, adding extraordinary barriers to accessible reproductive healthcare. After many forms of anti-choice terrorism, the trend of murdering reproductive healthcare providers by anti-choicers, which began with Dr. David Gunn's death in 1993, was yet another call to action for NCAP. The current understanding is that all abortion provider murders in the United States have ties to Operation Rescue, although the group

continually denies any claims to acts of violence. FMF has worked extensively with national law enforcement in defending clinics, working with clinics nationally to protect the safety of patients and healthcare workers, conducting research on national clinic access, and working alongside lawyers and lawmakers for safer healthcare accessibility.

Red Rose Rescue

In the same meeting, I received my first assignment for the project. Along with traveling to clinics in need of support throughout the country, NCAP also succeeds in defeating anti-choice groups largely by mass mobilization and infiltration of undercover work online to gather inside information. Much of this information goes toward security measures including to local law enforcement or for litigation use. An Operation Rescue affiliate group, also closely tied to the Army of God and Citizens for a Pro-Life Society, Red Rose Rescue (RRR) had their 2020 annual national conference date approaching, to be held in St. Louis, Missouri. The NCAP worked in collaboration with local police to prepare a security plan for the safety of the community during the RRR conference. I was in charge of updating the extensive list of RRR known members with any potential new members and any additional arrests – including the dates, locations, clinics invaded, and external people affected – for those already on the list, all to be shared with law enforcement who would be on high alert. In order to gather this information, I was given login information to a catfish, fake, Facebook account used for the NCAP that portrayed the character of a White male U.S. citizen aligned with anti-choice beliefs. This account had already gained access into private anti-choice Facebook groups, rubbing virtual shoulders with RRR members and others in the anti-choice community around the country. Along with this account, I sifted through online news articles, social media posts, and whatever information the Internet could provide me with to compile well-rounded information about RRR

members and their potential upcoming plans. I began by familiarizing myself with RRR and their tactics through their website and myriad videos on YouTube which showcase their rescues in action.

RRR Mission Statement:

The Red Rose Rescue is the Gospel of Life lived in words and deeds of merciful love.

The ministry flows from and is strengthened by prayer and laboring in love to save the most vulnerable among us. We live the Gospel of Life by responding to and putting into practice Proverbs 24:11: "Rescue those being dragged to death, and those tottering to execution withhold not. If you say 'I know not this man!' does not He who tests hearts not perceive it?"

During a Red Rose Rescue a team of pro-lifers enter the actual places where the innocent unborn are about to be "dragged to death." In the words of Saint Mother Teresa, they enter the "dark holes of the poor." Red Rose Rescuers peacefully talk to women scheduled for abortion, with the goal of persuading them to choose life. They offer to them red roses as a sign of life, peace and love. Should the unborn still "totter to execution" Red Rose Rescuers stay in the place of execution in solidarity with their abandoned brothers and sisters performing a non-violent act of defense through their continued presence inside the killing centers remaining with them for as long as they can.

The Rescuers stay with the abandoned unborn, as the manifestation of our love for them recognizing that unborn children, as members of the human family, have a right to be defended. The rescuers will not leave the unwanted, but must be "taken away." ("Red Rose Rescue." n.d.)

RRR has a "Get Involved" tab on their website with a list of upcoming rescues serving as an events calendar. Below this section, the rescue protocol is laid out along with other ways to organize with them followed by a call to action:

Would you be willing to help protect endangered women and children with the witness of Christ's love? Might you be ready to join the growing new prolife resistance of non-violent direct action? If so, there are many volunteer opportunities, roles and positions needed:

Inside the Abortion Center

Two to Six Rescuers Enter Clinic and:

a) sit-down in waiting room and talk to moms scheduled for abortion, offer them help facts about their unborn child, assistance, support and love—and eventually hand out

roses to everyone. Some will opt to remain in the abortion center in solidarity with the unborn scheduled to be aborted.

b) one or two others enter the clinic and remain incognito the whole time, they pray, and serve as witnesses should the rescuers be arrested and stand trial in court.

Outside the Abortion Clinic While the RRR is Taking Place

- prayer warriors outside the abortion center.*
- counselors/witnesses for life on the sidewalks to reach out to the moms going in.*
- media outreach, and spokespersons, communications contact.*
- video work, filming events and photography*

Other Ways to Be Involved

- local rescue site liaisons.*
- legal assistance and coordination.*
- monthly donors.*
- hospitality hosts for rescuers.*
- preparing roses and gifts for mothers, as well as for abortion facility staff.*
- outreach, recruitment, promotion, and advocacy.*
- education in non-violence.*
- writing and/or speaking.*
- website and social media assistance.*
- witnesses for life and supporters in the courtrooms.*
- prison support for rescuers.*
- trips and events coordinators.*
- development and fundraisers.*
- local and regional rescue team leaders.*
- literature and resource development/production.*
- intelligence and logistics.*
- intercessors for rescues and rescuers.*
- transportation aides.*

...as well as many more positions as the movement grows!

The defenseless need those of good will with their various gifts to help save lives, reach out to abortion victims and staff, and work tirelessly to confront and end the holocaust. Some may feel called to rescue and thus stay in solidarity with the little ones and refuse to leave the scene of the murder. This may lead to further positive witnessing for life opportunities in the courts, jails and broader culture.

Others may wish to pray and counsel inside the killing center but decide not to risk arrest. Some may wish to be prayer supporters from the sidewalks and in churches.

And still others may feel called to be a volunteer behind the scenes.

Everyone is needed! Everyone is important! The time to resist evil directly and courageously is NOW! Our ultimate goal: to build a global movement to rescue the defenseless whenever and wherever they are in danger with the peace, fortitude, humility, mercy and love of Jesus. We are looking for courageous men and women of prayer and action to join the cause. Become a volunteer with Red Rose Rescue, and with God's Grace, work to help defend lives, save souls, make reparation, and directly confront the

evil of child sacrifice in those darkest places in the world with the unstoppable light of Christ's love. ("Red Rose Rescue." n.d.)

The website also has a "News" tab with headlines of their most recent rescues, for example: "One RRR Shut Down a Planned Parenthood Abortion Clinic for the ENTIRE Day - No Abortions Took Place There!" Headlines like this are dated at an occurrence rate of every few months. Links to full articles are provided. There is also a donation link, which redirects you to a page on the Citizens for a Pro-Life Society website, with the initial attention-grabbing image of an underdeveloped fetus seemingly in-utero as the webpage banner ("Red Rose Rescue." n.d.).

I often find myself feeling appalled doing the NCAP research using Tor browser to monitor anti-choice groups and big names in the anti-choice movement across social media, on an undercover account that made it into their groups online. Researching the anti-choice tactics puts me into a state of shock while anger and disappointment rush through my body all at the same time as I sit in the office with my mouth agape staring at my computer screen as it unbiasedly shows me the other side of this war on reproductive rights that is well beyond the walls of my personal echo chamber. Occasionally, I would find videos on YouTube of RRR's "activism" tactics so overwhelming, I had to share the burden with the other interns and supervisors. This sparks conversations that make me feel their solidarity, creating a sense of strength and replenishing my ability to continue my work. I was constantly reminded of the importance of community by seeing those at FMF embody communal care. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

I familiarized myself more by cross-examining RRR's website with what I witnessed about their countermovement tactics from all of the YouTube videos of their "rescues". Upon searching "Red Rose Rescue" on YouTube, various kinds of videos come up, including: anti-choice propaganda pieces, news segments produced by networks covering the "pro-life" movement, interviews with anti-choicers, affiliated topics – covering "Men's March" promotions, the "dangers" of sex education for children, Christian sermons, accounts of clinic infiltration and protesting – which RRR refers to as their "rescue missions", and more.

For this analysis, I use one of RRR’s “rescue” videos entitled “People v Connolly - Red Rose Rescue in Flint, Michigan” posted by the American Freedom Law Center’s YouTube channel on September 11, 2019. The video’s description box reads: “This video was played live in open court during the preliminary examination in the case of People v. Connolly. The case involves a Red Rose Rescue in Flint, Michigan. The American Freedom Law Center is representing the pro-life defendants” (“People v Connolly - Red Rose Rescue in Flint, Michigan” n.d.) This video is one recorded account of RRR’s countless attempts to force pregnant people across the country to carry to term. What stands out in my analysis is the seductive recruitment used to bolster the anti-choice identity and self-formation process and the hypocrisy of anti-choice theory and practice.

“People v Connolly - Red Rose Rescue in Flint, Michigan” video description:

This twelve minute and fifteen-second-long video begins with a group of approximately ten police officers entering a reproductive healthcare clinic, seemingly from the vantage point of the police. Before the camera enters the waiting room, where the police are congregating, the singing of hymns becomes audible. Upon entering the clinic waiting area, four RRR anti-choicers are seen seated and singing. The police stand around them in the room and one clinic employee stands blocking a door that leads to the rest of the clinic. An officer asks one of the protesters to step aside and have a conversation. The clinic office manager speaks over the singing to officially request that the protesters leave the premises in front of the police officers, stating that they are trespassing on private property. The singing stops moments later only to try to convince all non-protesters to join in the singing. Conversation breaks out with the police repeating that the protesters must leave, which is met by one of the protesters repeating the goal of their protesting – to “save life” from the “murders” occurring in the clinic. After some discussion between officers, one of the police begins reading from a piece of paper, stating that this is trespassing and unlawful assembly and offers the opportunity to leave peacefully and immediately. The officer continues that refusal to do so will result in arrest. The protesters are given thirty seconds to leave prior to arrest. Throughout the instructions of the police, the protesters continue to pray and sing out aloud. After the allotted time period, the police begin to handcuff the anti-choicers and ask that they stand and walk out of the clinic and to the police cars. Each of the protesters refuse to stand by going limp, stating that they “cannot help” the officers and continue to pray or try to proselytize the police. Each protester is eventually carried out of the clinic by three or four officers. The last protester in the clinic is seen laying face-down on the floor with an officer next to them, patiently and unsuccessfully trying to have the protester comply. Red rose petals

and paper fliers belonging to the RRR protesters are seen strewn about the waiting room. A voice from behind the camera is heard sharing that they are only there to assist their friend who is a patient at the clinic. The protester on the floor begins attempting to counsel them to save their friend, the patient, from the “dangerous” clinic and to Google search “optionline.org”. The protesters continued to offer help and repeated that “it’s not too late”; “your baby loves you”; “you are allowed to change your mind – there is free help for you and your baby”. When the person the protester was attempting to counsel goes to the back area of the clinic, the officer asked again to have the protester stand, and they explained they follow “a higher law, God’s law” and will not help the officer in their arrest. Yelling to the back of the clinic, the protester says, “You are in danger. Women have been sent to the hospital” repeatedly and, “Your baby loves you. At eighteen days, your baby’s heart started beating just for you. You’re allowed to change your mind. You can cancel your appointment. You can get a refund; we can help you get a refund. I promise you it’s not too late. You can go to optionline.org. You can leave today and just think about it some more. It’s not too late. Your baby loves you. We love you. It’s not too late. You can go to optionline.org.” Similar talk continues until three officers lift the protester off the ground and they respond in praying and exasperated gasps. The camera follows this protester as they are placed face-down on the ground in the parking lot outside of the clinic while the officers ask that they comply and enter the police vehicle. They continue to refuse and are put into the vehicle by four officers as the prayer continues, interrupted by the protester complaining that their bra is exposed. Once the protester is completely in the vehicle, the video ends. (“People v Connolly - Red Rose Rescue in Flint, Michigan” n.d.)

As seen on RRR’s website and in this video, “during a Red Rose Rescue a team of proliferers enter the actual places where the innocent unborn are about to be ‘dragged to death.’” Although no known patients were shown in the video, the protester was also seen persuading the friend of a patient to help “them choose life”. Given the circumstances of arrest, protesters could not “offer to them red roses as a sign of life, peace and love” or “stay in the place of execution in solidarity with their abandoned brothers and sisters”. The video did, however, show that “the rescuers will not leave the unwanted, but must be ‘taken away.’” It is possible that “one or two others enter the clinic and remain incognito the whole time, they pray, and serve as witnesses should the rescuers be arrested and stand trial in court” was also executed by the cameraperson. The video did not show anti-choicers who might have been outside the clinic or who might have been involved in other ways for this specific event. Since this video was used as evidence for a

trial in court, it is possible that RRR members may have used this event to create “further positive witnessing for life opportunities in the courts, jails and broader culture” (“Red Rose Rescue.” n.d.).

Anti-Choice Recruitment and Identity Formation

The seduction used in RRR’s recruitment, and other anti-choice groups, lies in its hypocrisy of ignoring clear, abundant data that indicates rights to livable wages, affordable healthcare and education, sex education, and access to contraceptives being the factors that reduce abortion while supporting life of all beings -- which is what a term like “pro-life” might evoke at face value. General tactics used by the anti-choice movement, including criminalization of abortion, abstinence-based sex education, and clinic protesting, do not significantly reduce rates of abortion or attempted abortion. These anti-choice tactics do, however, reduce access to safe abortion practices. By offering an escapist path away from the existing population’s need for human rights advocacy, RRR posits the existential dread-fueled imaginary of a savior complex for hypothetical beings. Based on this unborn savior premise, RRR’s recruitment rhetoric builds through affective, outrageous means. Simultaneously, the anti-choice movement is situated in the Conservative value of upholding outdated, hegemonic roles for individuals seeking comfort in the status-quo through exclusionary measures.

Most men fail to live up to the model configuration of hegemonic masculinity. This failure threatens individual men and the patriarchy, from which most men benefit. Instead of confronting impossible ideals of hegemonic masculinity, many men may turn to “complicit masculinities” by allying themselves with some aspects of hegemonic masculinity. Complicit masculinities allow individual men to claim a “patriarchal dividend” reassuring the society-wide

ascendance of white, middle class, cis-gendered heterosexual masculinity (Thakkilapati 2019).

Abortion aims to maintain homogeneity and control over a limited ideal of femininity. In this framework, hierarchies within femininity are primarily determined by their relationship to hegemonic masculinity. As such, hegemonic femininity comprises the characteristics and practices that legitimate the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. Pariah femininities are embodied by AFAB individuals who adopt features of hegemonic masculinity such as “desire for the feminine object, physical strength, and authority.” Those who perform pariah femininities threaten male dominance, but this threat is typically contained because women who perform pariah femininities are sanctioned and socially expelled for doing so. Third, AFAB people may enact alternative femininities that reject the idealization of relations of dominance and subordination between men and women (Thakkilapati 2019). In terms of this movement and countermovement, feminism supports the dismantling of reductive gendered systems, while the anti-choice movement solely supports a hegemonic femininity contingent upon hegemonic masculinity.

To further expand on pariah femininities and identities, feminist scholars of color have asserted the importance of theorizing how race and class differences shape relations among AFAB people. White AFAB people are closer to the structures of white patriarchy because they are necessary for the reproduction of White offspring. They may be “seduced into joining the oppressor under the pretense of sharing power” and are presented with a “wider range of fictitious choices and rewards for identifying with patriarchal power and its tools” (Thakkilapati 2019). BIPOC AFAB individuals, who have historically been subjected to more violent and direct forms of social control, have typically resisted sociopolitical justifications for their

oppression based on race and class as well as gender. Norma Alarcón argues that white feminist theory tends to acknowledge these differences and then proceeds to negate these differences by “subsuming women of color into the unitary category of woman” (Alarcón 1991). However, “‘one becomes a woman’ in ways that are much more complex than homogenous opposition to men. In cultures in which asymmetric race and class relations are a central organizing principle of society, one may also ‘become a woman’ in opposition to other women.” Much of the struggle for reproductive justice is a struggle over the meanings and practices associated with hegemonic femininity. In the contemporary United States, hegemonic femininity is associated with white, middle-class motherhood. In this ideology, ideal motherhood should be planned, occur within marriage to a man, and involve intensive monitoring throughout pregnancy and childhood, and mothers should be financially independent of the state (Thakkilapati 2019). The identity of femininity rooted in gender binary and roles in servitude to the patriarchy is necessary for patriarchal oppression.

RRR adorns their mission with a sense of purpose-filled language – to “stay in the place of execution in solidarity with their abandoned brothers and sisters” fuels those susceptible to anti-choice rhetoric with the required sense of emotional emergency in response to their call to arms that “You can help save the innocent unborn” even in more entry-level approaches to this countermovement by becoming involved as a “prayer warriors outside the abortion center” (“Red Rose Rescue.” n.d.).

Militant language incites further provocation for joining this countermovement in affective, appropriative phrases such as: “The defenseless need those of good will with their various gifts to help save lives, reach out to abortion victims and staff, and work tirelessly to

confront and end the holocaust. Some may feel called to rescue and thus stay in solidarity with the little ones and refuse to leave the scene of the murder” and

Everyone is needed! Everyone is important! The time to resist evil directly and courageously is NOW! Our ultimate goal: to build a global movement to rescue the defenseless whenever and wherever they are in danger with the peace, fortitude, humility, mercy and love of Jesus. We are looking for courageous men and women of prayer and action to join the cause. Become a volunteer with Red Rose Rescue, and with God's Grace, work to help defend lives, save souls, make reparation, and directly confront the evil of child sacrifice in those darkest places in the world with the unstoppable light of Christ's love. (“Red Rose Rescue.” n.d.)

Anti-choicers utilize pernicious approaches of proselytizing, manipulating patients away from informed consent and bodily autonomy in their choices, and spreading misinformation. This use of rhetoric, when successful, motivates anti-choice recruits to act in overtly hazardous ways, in this case, to willingly break laws – RRR’s tactics are repetitively in violation of the FACE Act in their attempts to obstruct individuals from receiving reproductive healthcare and violates private property laws.

The YouTube channel under which the above analyzed RRR video has an affiliated video, posted nine days later, entitled “Red Rose Rescue Trial” for which the description box states: “The American Freedom Law Center (AFLC), a nonprofit, Judeo-Christian, public interest law firm, is representing four courageous Red Rose Rescuers in a criminal trial, and they need your help. Please prayerfully consider supporting this just cause. AFLC is representing the pro-lifers pro-bono (for the good). Thank you, and God bless!” (“Red Rose Rescue Trial” n.d.)

“Red Rose Rescue Trial” video description:

The co-founder and senior counsel of AFLC, announces that he is to represent four RRR members who faced criminal charges, including a felony charge, in the People v Connolly case in Flint, MI. The man speaking in the video is Robert Muse. The close up shot of his face shows Robert with furrowed brows speaking in a manner to conjure feelings of sympathy for the RRR members on trial, bolstering claims that their intentions

were only to save innocent life. Forty-five seconds into the video, requests for donations are stated as Muse explains that he is including this as one of his pro bono cases. He goes on to affectively and incorrectly state the horrors of abortion: the mom and the baby are both victims of this kind of killing. After thanking and blessing the viewers, the video extends into a testimony from William Goodman, a RRR member, as he holds a large red rose prop and shares RRR's tactic of entering clinics rather than remaining outside of clinics for more commonplace sidewalk counseling. He continues with claims of unjust treatment, positioning RRR and its members as victims in need of attorneys for instances when the justice system becomes involved. Goodman states that this work involves the "human rights of children". The video ends with the flashing of three sentences: "Help us defend life!" "Help us fight for justice!" "Please support our fight for the Red Rose Rescuers" ("Red Rose Rescue Trial" n.d.)

The repercussions of this debate extend beyond the abortion issue, becoming characteristic of fundamental clashes over value systems, gender orders and family organization, rights, boundaries between church and state, and societal missions of nationhood (Maier 2018). Law makes and unmakes people (Gómez 2013). We see this ideological war take place on clinic sidewalks, the internet, inside of clinics – both fake and real as the anti-choice countermovement has created fake reproductive health clinics mimicking real ones as sites to further coerce pregnant people to give birth, and within many places of discourse. It is paramount to understand that much of this war is born in Congress and in the proliferation of many other policies pertaining to the economy, family, gender, and the condemnation of science by the United States.

Weaponized Rhetoric: Hypocrisy, Appropriation and Emotional Manipulation

In studying RRR's countermovement work, I was struck by the hypocrisy of their messages. This extremist anti-choice Christian group aligns themselves with right-wing Conservative political values. Using RRR's previously cited statements from their website, I will discuss points that elicit the inconsistency of values that is so prevalent in right-wing anti-choice rhetoric.

The Bible verse featured in RRR's mission statement is Proverbs 24:11: "Rescue those being dragged to death, and those tottering to execution withhold not. If you say 'I know not this man!' does not He who tests hearts not perceive it?" While this sentiment rings true to this group's self-proclaimed stance on being "pro-life", it is most common for right-wing groups to simultaneously vote in support of capital punishment, deny human rights violations pertaining to refugees and immigrants seeking refuge in the United States, deny affordable healthcare and social services, ignore data showing that anti-choice restrictions correlate with higher maternal and infant mortality rates, and so on. The approach to "pro-life" activism which calls on humanity to unconditionally love and advocate for all people effectively exists only within the singular context of fetus survival when examined politically, thus contradicting this self-proclaimed title.

Hypocritical, coercive language lies in phrases, listed from the RRR website, describing anti-choice activism as "choosing life", "performing a non-violent act" in order to "help protect endangered women and children", referring to reproductive healthcare centers as "killing centers", and the assumption that all patients are "moms". Forced pregnancy is an atrocious act of violence with the power to dismantle rights access to all many human rights for the person forced to give birth, essentially giving the pregnant person's ability to choose a life of their own making for themselves. The statement "Red Rose Rescuers peacefully talk to women scheduled for abortion with the goal of persuading them to choose life" ("Red Rose Rescue." n.d.) sheds light on the profound delusion that RRR considers this activism to be peaceful rather than a blatant attempt at coercion under the guise of a poorly misled savior complex. The countermovement has found tools to convince the public that fetuses are a misunderstood and oppressed social

group. Increasingly, anti-abortion forces are misusing images and language to link abortion with known cases of human genocide and ultimately establish guilt by association (Shrage 2002).

Clinic Escorting with L.A. For Choice

While researching RRR through the NCAP at FMF, I also began volunteering as a clinic escort through L.A. For Choice. Carmen, another of my internship supervisors, invited me to join this group by volunteering on Sundays at FPA Women's Health in Downey, California.

Penelope and I have become fast friends through this internship together. She also joined me on these Sundays at the clinic. We were in great moods, laughing, playing loud music and jamming out on our first drive from L.A. to Downey, about half an hour. The drive back from Downey to L.A. had a completely different tone to it. We vented about, analyzed, and contemplated the shocking experience of first-time clinic escorting. The intense inundation of misinformation verbally cast at the clinic patients and us for the past few hours felt like a weighted vest that took hours to shed. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

The clinic becomes a warzone when anti-choice recruitment efforts motivate “warriors” to “save lives” of “abortion victims” and “work tirelessly to confront and end the holocaust” because anti-choicers have come to believe that reproductive healthcare clinics are “killing centers” that commit “murder” (“Red Rose Rescue.” n.d.). My understanding of this solidified when I began volunteering as a clinic escort. As we were advised never to communicate with the anti-choice protesters while escorting, I only observed the anti-choicers at FPA Women's Health. Although they did not share RRR's tactic of entering clinics or handing out red roses, the protesters in Downey were otherwise similar in much of their rhetoric and ultimate goal: to coerce pregnant people into carrying to term and giving birth as well as spread their anti-choice beliefs as far and wide as possible. Each week of clinic escorting grew more exhausting as a volunteer as 40 Days for Life grew closer and eventually started. The increase in protester numbers and fervor seemed linear, as did my need for emotional regulation after volunteering.



Figure 2: FPA Women's Health, Downey, California (Google images)

The brief, but clear training for clinic escorting consisted of three seasoned L.A. For Choice volunteers, including Carmen, also my internship supervisor at FMF, standing in a circle with new volunteers – Penelope, two people I hadn't met before from the greater Los Angeles area, and myself. We were informed of the general rhythm of escorting patients from the parking lot in the back of FPA Women's Health to the clinic entrance on the left side of the building. Luckily, for both patients and clinic escorts, this meant that escorting did not cross physical paths with the protesters as they were only allowed to stand on the sidewalk in front of the clinic that runs parallel with Firestone Blvd. Escorts stand in the back of the building to offer escorting to the door to all patients as they move from their cars toward the entrance. If patients consent to escorting, escorts walk in front of and behind patients to the entrance, similar to bodyguards, to act as a barrier to the verbal and potentially physical attacks from protesters. L.A. For Choice volunteers also stood at either side of the clinic parking lot entrance on the boulevard, as well. This provided another barrier between protesters and patients for physical and emotional

protection. Volunteer escorts were always in groups of two or more for our safety and wore bright orange vests with “PRO-CHOICE CLINIC ESCORT ESCOLTA CLINICA” printed on the fronts and backs.



Figure 3: L.A. For Choice clinic escort vest (photo credit: Tuttle, Nicolette)

After the first couple of patients, the rhythm set in. Initially, I was partnered with Penelope and a more experienced volunteer at the parking lot behind the clinic to greet and offer the escorting service to patients as they arrived. As new experiences of interest tend to be, this was all very exciting for the first few Sundays. After some time, the reality of this work set in. Most of the time was spent waiting. I did prefer the back of the clinic position where patient interaction occurred most, and volunteers could chat the hours away with one another.

Each patient that walked toward the entrance was asked if they would like escorts to walk with them to the clinic entrance. We explained that we are with the clinic. Although most patients graciously agreed which initiated the escorts to fall into formation around the patient or group and walk to the clinic in silence together or with pleasant small talk floating between the escorts and patients, some had curiosity and questions about the intricacies of our work. This

most always was skepticism-filled. Although we each had vests on with our position explained as well as verbally sharing that we are working on behalf of the clinic to support the patients, some individuals were clearly too shaken up to absorb that information at first.

Oftentimes, patients come to the clinic in groups, with their families, or with another person, maybe a partner or a friend. In these cases, we as volunteers may or may not be able to discern who the patient is unless the patient is pregnant. Less often, they come alone and tend to be more nervous. In both cases, I have experienced skepticism from patients that we are in fact pro-choice and there to support them. After a handful of Sundays at the clinic, I have now heard from most of these skeptics that they have some sort of trauma related to the anti-choice protesters and seeing them at all can be triggering. One patient shared that they had been to a clinic where anti-choice protesters wore the same color vests as the escorts which made it difficult to discern the two groups from each other and extend trust to anyone. Each patient we walked to the clinic entrance was showered with verbally violent rhetoric from the protesters confined to the sidewalk. Each patient we walked to the clinic entrance thanked us. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

If the patient were to decline escorting, we would respectfully fall back, although I never personally experienced this. The point of this work is to respect the ability to make decisions about one's own life and situation, sometimes even decisions that might make us individually uncomfortable, for example, if a patient were to engage in a conversation with the anti-choicers. For patients who wanted an escort, we never touched or hugged them without consent or their initiation. The experience is designed to fit the needs of the patient as a means of putting them in control of their experience and its interpretation (Reinhardt-Simpson 2016).

The front of the clinic sidewalk position was much more monotonous, as we were advised not to talk to each other much, and never converse or make eye contact with the protesters, and for good reason. The protesters would often eavesdrop and try to join or mock conversations they overheard, twisting anything and everything into an opportunity to convince us and any passersby that we are complicit in the murder of babies at this killing center. The verbiage of the anti-choicers I had come into contact with, whether virtually or in person in

Downey, was largely homogenous. While this position was more emotionally taxing than at the back of the clinic, it was more efficient for observing the protesters.

The anti-choicer John was there each Sunday that I was. He was the loudest, sometimes amplified by a megaphone or karaoke-style microphone and speaker. He wore extremist phrases on his clothing, pointing to his political and social opinions in favor of Trump and Jesus and against the queer community and abortion; he usually had a large tattered poster of a scientifically inaccurate graphic depiction of an aborted fetus that he would use to explain to anyone about the distresses of reproductive healthcare. He mostly spoke ramblings into the ether or to himself, loudly, between screaming at patients walking into the clinic or attempting to sidewalk counsel anyone who happened to walk or drive by. He often tried to speak or argue with the clinic volunteers present, despite our best efforts to avoid communication and conflict. Another weekly protester was a woman who always had a rosary wrapped around her wrist and plenty of miniature Bibles to hand to anyone walking past. I never heard her speak out loud as she mostly prayed in whispers. Less consistent in their protest schedule was a small group of three to five women who huddled together in prayer and attempted a gentler approach to sidewalk counseling than John. They had small pamphlets or information cards filled with anti-choice information that they would try to hand to anyone walking by, and they often tried to speak with us. These three categories of protesters rarely, if ever, seemed to converse with one another.

Police vehicles passed by often, occasionally slowing down and asking the L.A. For Choice volunteers for updates on how the day was going and if we needed their support or intervention with the anti-choice protesters. Although we never took the police up on their offer, we thanked them for their support. Another volunteer shared with me that police intervention had

been necessary in the past with this group of protesters at FPA Women's Health. This was not surprising to me; the anti-choice protesters I had researched and come face to face with exhibited an understanding for creating a spectacle for exposure. Most rhetoric and protest tactics generate a feeling of terror and thereby produce the feeling that the pregnant person and fetus need to be saved (Shrage 2002). Anti-choicers are not generally interested in an individual's reasons for controlling their fertility; it is not the point. To them, a person aborting a fetus is committing the crime of stepping outside a narrow theological definition of womanhood (Reinhardt-Simpson 2016).

Discourse War

While escorting a Black couple to the clinic entrance, John accessed a level of shock I had not yet experienced. Upon seeing the couple approach closer with us, he repeated at the top of his lungs, "BLACK LIVES MATTER, BLACK LIVES MATTER. IF YOU GO IN THERE, THEY WILL KILL YOUR BLACK BABY. DON'T YOU BELIEVE BLACK LIVES MATTER?" Moments later, as we escorted a Latinx couple, John yelled Spanish-sounding nonsense to them. Racial profiling compounded the experiences of harassment. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

Black Genocide Theory posits abortion as a crime against African Americans, and that abortion and contraception became mainstream in the 1920's to eradicate the black race. Though many working for reproductive justice deride this theory, it has some basis in fact. The eugenics movement enthusiastically embraced modern birth control technology as a method of controlling race reproduction. However, this theory ignores the fact that many black [AFAB people] found relief from the availability of birth control and abortion, and it also ignores economic realities and continuing American segregation with its claim that clinics exist in low-income neighborhoods simply to target black [AFAB people's] children for genocide. The Black Genocide Theory is a pronatalist theory and, as such, is not interested in the actual lives and well-being of [AFAB people]. (Reinhardt-Simpson 2016)

This countermovement spreads misinformation additionally via staged emotional street protests eliciting shock value, with babies portrayed as "American holocaust survivors", supposedly children born after *Roe v. Wade*, set against photos of "American holocaust victims" depicting images of what are meant to represent aborted fetuses. Exploiting the conventions of terror, catastrophe, folk narrative, and guerrilla art, anti-abortion productions provide

performances of lives in crisis and societies on the near obliteration (Shrage 2002). The gross appropriation of genocidal atrocities is insurmountably reckless and precisely the kind of shock spectacle designed for the emotional outrage used as the premise on which anti-choice rhetoric is built.

Disputes over abortion rarely center those most involved; the pregnant people themselves are largely invisible, objects in a theological thought experiment. When pregnant people are acknowledged by anti-choicers, it is no more helpful:

*At times, protesters try to make up for this lack of focus on [pregnant people] as agents by trying to paint the act of abortion as gruesome and violent, as damaging to their health and well-being. To this end, they use medically discredited information about the procedure and its effects. Abortion is usually performed in about a ten-to-fifteen-minute procedure (unless one is having a late-term abortion, only 2 percent of abortions performed in the United States, or medication abortion). Recovery includes a couple of days of cramping and heavy menstrual-like bleeding. There are no mental illnesses associated with abortion and no link to breast cancer. Before having the procedure, a woman meets with a counselor to determine that she is not being coerced and that she understands her rights and options. Nonetheless, protesters will claim concern for [pregnant people] by painting a horrific picture of an operating room (operating rooms are not usually used) and the extraction of fetal limbs (the fetus is usually too small for anyone to discern limbs). They will also claim that death is a very real possibility despite abortion being one of the safest procedures, about four times safer than a colonoscopy¹³. Some protesters are accepting debunked science as valid in good faith. But there is another current of thinking that one can find on their social media sites and in conversation outside the clinic and that is that one is justified in telling falsehoods if it results in a moral victory, in this case, saving a fetus. There is a long tradition in Roman Catholicism of theological debate on the nature of falsehood (Augustine's *On Lying* being but one of many) and what a falsehood truly is. Some Roman Catholic protesters have embraced the idea that telling a lie is justified if a life (fetus) is saved. Still others take a more nuanced approach and believe that a person is justified in deceiving but that some subtlety is necessary. (Reinhardt-Simpson 2016)*

I noticed myself having an unexpected different reaction to the anti-choice women versus the anti-choice men outside of the clinic. I understood more how white, cis, straight, Christian men could have privilege blocking their understanding of the detriment of anti-choice protesting. Seeing the women, of which there were more than their male counterparts, protesting in front of the clinic upset me on a deeper level. I began to see their internalized misogyny as a kind of Stockholm syndrome or discipline from the oppressive forces that hold them and all uterus owners captive to a façade of rights built on a shaky foundation. Eventually, I redirected my frustration once again at systemic injustices, noting the increased discipline this work asked of me in order to stay grounded

in the mission and not fall prey to the waves of frustration as they inevitably come crashing down. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

Characteristics associated with hegemonic femininity are authorized as the most acceptable as they legitimize a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity, guaranteeing dominant power to men and the subordination of women. The discursive ruling of uterus owners' reproductive labor is required for the making of gendered hierarchical social arrangements seem inevitable (Thakkilapati 2019). As Gómez (2013) says, "We must also remember the irony that the colonized may also become like their invaders, assimilating a colonial mindset. This colonial mentality accepts the dominant culture, gender class, and sexuality as normal, natural, and good." Sociologist Colette Guillaumin has proposed the concept of *sexage* (after the French words for serfdom and slavery) to describe the relationship between the sexes, which is "the collective and individual appropriation of [AFAB people] by men – [AFAB] bodies, the products of their bodies, and their labor power" (Blais and Dupuis-Déri 2012).

As increasing progressive movements stand up to inequities and inequalities of the white capitalist patriarchy, conservative rejection of feminist discourse and family reconfiguration promotes desire for the ostensible security associated with industrial institutionalism. Religious doctrine traditionally accompanied conservative trends, fashioning narratives of primordial truths and perceptions of existential perpetuity in the midst of the disruptive, anti-paradigmatic atmosphere of ongoing fluid society. Two antagonistic biopolitical and philosophical ideals strive for hegemony in national impact (Maier 2018).

Masculinism proliferates in the countermovement to protect the non-egalitarian system, the patriarchy. A backlash occurs when a dominant group feels threatened by groups who are marginalized by the status-quo and mean to transform existing power structures. The backlash is

often reactionary to a threat to their privileges because they feel the loss of privilege as an outrage (Blais and Dupuis-Déri 2012). Cis-men on either side of the issue tend to see abortion as a heart-breaking and difficult decision, which gives more power to the idea that someone needs to be helping the pregnant individual choose, while AFAB people tend to recognize that abortion can be a challenging decision to make, it is also often not challenging to choose, and commonly made harder due to the construct of intensity imbued on the topic (Reinhardt-Simpson 2016). This contrived intensity, however, is an intentional product design of anti-choice rhetoric.

By making reproductive labor visible and expanding reproductive control, abortion challenges patriarchal control of reproduction. Rather than enhancing reproductive justice, however, policies regarding abortion since *Roe v. Wade* have been characterized by restrictive legislation, lack of funding, and social stigma. In this time, racist, classist, and misogynistic images of the “welfare queen” have delegitimized and disassembled necessary social welfare programs that support reproductive labor. These reproductive policies constrain both abortion and parenthood, pointing to the intersection of race, class, and gender ideologies that reinforce abortion and reproductive politics in a double-bind (Thakkilapati 2019). “[AFAB people] have always ‘organized against the almost routine violence that shapes their lives’, writes Kimberlé Crenshaw (1993). In a similar light, Gomez (2013) emphasizes that, “Those who are the plotters of history, are [people] of substance, of imagination, a formidable social force.”

Feminist Praxis: Politics of Hope

“Stories are data with soul.” - Brene Brown

Through participant-observation and semi-structured interviews with four participants, I encountered feminist praxis as a politics of dislocation, investing heavily in collective imaginings to materialize a reality that is not yet fully tangible: a world of equity. My original plan for interviewing participants at FMF was derailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and

shutdowns. Instead of sitting face to face in a space together, I reached out to a few of my internship colleagues and supervisor via email from my Bellingham, Washington apartment and, with consent, recorded phone interviews. Mutually constituting, while emphasizing positionality as a perspective and loci of annunciation in praxis offers a new vision of possibility: possibilities dreamt and enacted (Gómez 2013).

I spoke with three FMF interns I worked with: Penelope (she/her) from Aix En Provence, France; Elsa (she/her) from Northridge, California; and Amelia (she/her) from Pasadena, California. I also interviewed my internship supervisor, Jess (she/her) from Santa Monica, California, who granted me access into the FMF space and made this research possible. Each interview turned into a precious conversation with people I deeply admire and respect. I am grateful to have crossed paths with these brilliant, powerful individuals.

Definitions and Representations of Feminism

All participants self-identified as feminists and share similar definitions for what feminism means to them. “[Feminism is] a way for underrepresented populations to get representation in society. It’s a way to have our voice[s] heard through advocacy and education” (Elsa, interview 2020). “Feminism is a political movement trying to create equality. It’s about all human rights and putting everyone on a level playing field. [I am] a feminist because I spend every day trying to raise awareness about social justice and inequality, whether that’s racial, environmental, the list goes on. I care deeply about those issues” (Amelia, interview 2020). “The goal [of feminism] is to reach equality between all kinds of people. I want equality, and I do things in my life to reach toward equality, not always through big things but by continuing to learn about feminism like doing the internship at FMF and writing my thesis on a feminist subject” (Penelope, interview 2020).

Feminism is advocating for all people to live meaningful, comfortable lives without having to worry about systemic oppression or any other obstacles based on their identity. For folks to have equal access to that in any sort of sphere. So, talking about gender identity, cultural identity, sexual orientation, pretty much any sort of identity that has been currently marginalized by the dominant white, heterosexual, cis patriarchy that we are living in. I've always just wanted to be in a line of work that was helping people. I feel like I empathize a lot. In my experience, coming to the United States from Mexico, seeing the racism that is in the United States and having experienced that first-hand, I wanted to make a change. I felt like with this career path or identity, I could do that. I also feel that we have a lot of problems, especially with racial equity and climate change, and we don't have time to be divisive. It's really important that we focus on those issues now. (Jess, interview 2020)

Each of the participants had different inspirations for joining the movement, although all agreed that equity and equality were motivators. Entry points to feminism included: the gender wage gap for Latinx women in the U.S. compared to white men (Elsa, interview 2020), identity as a woman of color in the United States (Jess, interview 2020), making an impact on inequalities like ever-present misogyny (Amelia, interview 2020), and patriarchal control of certain bodies reduced by their sex (Penelope, interview 2020).

Representation is vital in spaces of activism. When the participants were asked to share one of their most admired feminist figures in our interviews, I enjoyed hearing their answers. Elsa shared with me that the person who first came to mind was not someone whose name she even knew, but an activist who had gone viral in a short video online for repurposing the term “slut”, most commonly defined as a woman who engages in many sexual encounters, as a form of empowerment. “There is an interviewer, who is against the Slut Walk, asking her why she is in support of the Slut Walk. She is basically saying, well I can be a slut if I want! She was kind of embodying the whole [Slut Walk] movement.” From having scrolled through this activist-gone-viral’s Twitter feed, which never revealed their name, it was also apparent that this individual is a feminist and advocate of diversifying the modeling industry (Elsa, interview 2020). The Slut Walk is a global movement that emerged from feminist protest in 2011 after a

police officer stated that women ought to stop dressing like sluts to prevent themselves from becoming victims of sexual harassment and crimes. This violent accusation which dangerously reinforces the “she was asking for it” victim-blaming adage sparked global mobilization shedding light on sexist issues of sexual profiling and slut shaming.

Amelia named Rachel Cargle, an author, speaker, and prolific activist in civil rights and the Black Lives Matter movement. Penelope offered a French feminist, Virginie Despente. “She is kind of radical when you look at French feminism overall. She is one of the most direct; she’s an ex-prostitute and she thinks everything is a construct – like heterosexuality. She’s publicly a lesbian. She is really cool and writes fiction. I love reading her work” (Penelope, interview 2020). “I am a big fan of Audre Lorde, Kimberlé Crenshaw of course, and Roxanne Gay. Different people are doing different things. Within feminism there are so many concepts and topics that you could focus on that there are people doing really great things in each area” (Jess, interview 2020).

Sex Ed: Institutional Introductions to Sexual and Reproductive Well-Being

Sex education ideally equips young people with comprehensive knowledge about sexual health, reproductive mechanisms, and tools for safe, empowered sex on the basis of pleasure and reproductive choices in an inclusive framework. This is a necessary component for supporting bodily autonomy. When sex education is poor quality or not available to people, the ramifications are substantial in terms of health, consent, and reproductive control. Without this understanding, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies are much more prevalent. Anti-choicers reveal more fallacies in their approach to their desired goal to stop people from having abortions when they do not condone comprehensive sex education in children’s schools. With the archaic belief that sex education promotes premarital sex, anti-choicers leave almost no room for

reproductive control when also standing against family planning and contraceptives. This becomes especially horrific for nonconsensual sexual occurrences. Ultimately, these conditions support a pro-birth conviction for all people who could become pregnant.

I wanted to know what kinds of sex education the participants received in their schools as children. All four participants condemned the quality of their sex education experiences. In southern California, Elsa and Jess both went through versions of abstinence-based sex education:

From high school, I only remember one presentation. There were people in costumes and a condom over a banana – that’s all I remember. In middle school, they showed pictures of sexually transmitted infections. I feel like that was just to scare us to not have sex, which is definitely not the right thing! Then, I remember someone came in to give a presentation on HIV/AIDS because had lost her hands from it. So, she was giving us a speech on why it’s bad to have sex. It was basically abstinence only education, which I do not like at all. I remember thinking that people will have sex anyways, though, so I didn’t understand why they weren’t teaching the safest ways [to be sexually active] besides putting a condom on a banana. There are other ways [to have sex] that should have definitely been represented. (Elsa, interview 2020)

I don’t remember much... We learned about condoms. It was very stigmatized, and we did not talk about people having safe sex. That’s ideally what you want to talk about, because people are going to have sex whether or not they have resources [for sex safe] or if the parents agree with it or not. It was definitely something I was afraid of because that’s what sex was shown as – something that was fearful and you had to stay away from because it would ruin your life. I grew up in south Los Angeles, in a lower income area without a lot of resources. I think our sex-ed teacher was our P.E. teacher. (Jess, interview 2020)

Amelia was not exposed to it at all through Kansas online schooling. “I did all of my school online, so I didn’t have any sex ed at all in Kansas. The people I know who went to public school said that it wasn’t good. We didn’t talk about it that much. People who had the class said it was a horrible class” (Amelia, interview 2020). Penelope was taught sex education in the east region of France.

For everybody in France, there are two classes for sex education. One at about 13 or 14 years old and another at 16, but it is only like two hours each. So, from school, I have only had four hours of education. We were told about the morning after pill but warned not to take it too often because it might cause sterilization. That’s basically what we

heard! Also, how to put on a condom. It was not a good sex education at school. Americans, though I think, get really bad sex education. (Penelope, interview 2020)

Criticism of low quality or a lack of sex education is linked to the understanding of the importance of it as a means for overall safety and well-being. Its importance was discussed in terms of reproductive rights. Affirmative consent, bodily autonomy, misinformation circulation, and the need for normalizing sex-based conversations were examined as implications of sex education.

“If you don’t know how, you’re likely not going to practice healthy sex -- it plays a role in affirmative consent. The younger population doesn’t really understand what that [affirmative consent] is, and that is really important to teach. Whole generations can get into the wrong mindset [around sex] if it is not taught correctly” (Elsa, interview 2020). The Oxford Dictionary provides the following definition for affirmative consent: “explicit, informed, and voluntary agreement to participate in a sexual act.” Clear consent and communication in any and all sex is vital for respecting the personhood of all those participating in sexual acts together. In the United States, affirmative consent policies first emerged in 1991 at Antioch College in Ohio, and California was the first state to pass a bill mandating affirmative consent in sexual activities in 2014 (Herman, 2014).

Touching on the correlation to anti-choice thought’s logical fallacies, Jess said, “If you want people to stop having abortions, you should advocate for birth control, emergency contraception, and access to all resources to prevent pregnancy which should be discussed and provided in sex-ed. It plays such an important part, and we don’t have access to it. This is about controlling people’s bodies.”

The ambiguity produced by incomprehensive lessons on sexual wellness and functioning redirects those needing to learn about sex toward the vast, unqualified Internet. Full of

misinformation, this is a fertile breeding ground for harmful views about sex in general (Amelia, interview 2020). Luckily, Penelope had a positive experience in using the Internet to supplement her knowledge. “I educated myself by talking to people and social media when I was 18. This is when I learned about inclusive pleasure and everything. I learned about that in my personal life after high school. People should know options for reproductive control and be able to discuss it openly. It should be encouraged in schools, relationships, and even within families” (Penelope, interview 2020).

Intersubjective Perceptions of Feminism in the United States

The discrepancy between perceptions of feminism prior to knowledge of it and feminism itself is vast. It was not until my junior year of university that I learned the contemporary meaning of feminism and came to fully identify as a feminist myself. Growing up, my understanding of feminism was riddled with misogynistically-fed stereotypes, regurgitating reductive assumptions that feminism is divisive and reinforcing of gender inequality. This ignorant stance reflected deeply embedded popular opinions I had grown up around. My feminist journey has evolved immensely and will surely continue to. The participants also experienced profound evolution as feminists in knowledge and identity; they share those initial assumptions, perceived public opinions of feminism in the United States, and predictions for the trajectory of reproductive rights in the United States.

In expressing her initial notion of feminism, Jess said, “I got my undergrad degree in gender studies, and when I first started to learn about these concepts in college, my freshman year, my definition was much more: for women to be treated equal to men -- very reductive.” Similarly, Amelia stated, “I have understood it more politically as I’ve gotten older and have had a bit of a political awakening. Also, seeing how environmental issues, policy, and the places we

live affects the whole battle for equal rights and affects everyone differently.” “Before, I thought it was just to defend women’s rights. Now, I believe it means equality for everyone. Men, and all people, need to participate” (Penelope, interview 2020).

At first, I thought it was just about women, but then I realized that a lot of the education that we are taught is usually clouded by white feminism and doesn’t really show how the trans population is affected or the Latinx community, so throughout the years, I realized it’s not just about women. It is also about the underrepresented and how we can make change for equality for all people. (Elsa, interview 2020)

Initial assumptions are heavily influenced by public opinions. I asked each participant to offer their understanding of what they perceive the average view of feminism might be in the United States. All four participants had overcome the common misconception that somehow this form of thinking and activism was an anti-man movement; their assumptions on public opinions reflected this as well. Jess offered an analytical possibility: “There are people who are against equality – cis-gender, straight white men tend to be in that group as they see it as taking away their rights. But no, we are trying to make sure everybody is treated equally – not by taking away any rights but by acknowledging the disproportionate privilege that some have.” In this line of thinking, it could also be that those with the most privilege in society may view feminists as much too radical, underscored by the fear that perhaps feminism would do to the most privileged what they have done to all other populations: marginalize and attempt to control their lives and bodies for their excessive benefit (Penelope, interview 2020).

Current views on the state of reproductive rights and subsequent predictions for their trajectory were given by participants. Critiques came up in all answers with positive remarks in most. The need for accessible healthcare and the destigmatization of pregnancy prevention measures like birth control and sex education (Elsa, interview 2020), a conservative Supreme Court that could overturn *Roe v. Wade* (Jess, interview 2020), and religious beliefs reinforcing

misogynistic policies were balanced with positive stances for progress made and likely to be made. Penelope, however, was the only participant with a soberingly negative response, coming from her perspective having visited the United States from France for the FMF internship, she shared that she was surprised by outdated popular opinions and lack of access around reproductive rights.

“Rights are born out of needs; rights are legal articulations of claims to meet human needs and protect human freedoms. Instead of a rights/needs hierarchy, there is, in fact, a rights/needs symbiosis” (Ross et al. 2001). Barriers to reproductive rights and justice in the U.S. were discussed with participants, including cultural upbringing (Elsa, interview 2020), policies and issues around voting (Amelia, interview 2020), and religion and the Trump effect (Penelope, interview 2020). Jess’s response spoke directly to my research:

When I was an [FMF] intern, I did all of the monitoring [for the NCAP] so I got to see what all of these [anti-choice] groups are talking about, how hateful they are, and how many there are. That was intimidating. Once I started working on the program, we traveled to the Midwest and went to clinics that were being targeted by protesters. It clicked, and I saw that that is one of the biggest threats. They have murdered providers. There is no moral code there. It’s really not about being “pro-life”, it’s about controlling bodies. That’s the fascist state where you start to target communities to be controlled, and that’s how you gain power. We are seeing that with the Trump administration. We have seen that with Hitler and the Nazis with how they were targeting specific groups of people. So that [anti-choice] group, it’s not a majority, but it is still intimidating to see people like that. They spread false information about the reality of abortion and why people need access. That is super harmful, because false information is the reason why we are in this situation. (Jess, interview 2020)

In 1984, Rosalind Petchesky, one of the first feminist scholars to calling attention to the “cultural guerrilla warfare against abortions” and the need to fight it, showed that anti-abortion groups have succeeded in changing common understandings of pregnancy and abortion, yet they were largely unsuccessful in their legislative goals. The projection of abortion as a moral struggle between a fetal individual and pregnant person has a relatively recent history and a

dangerous potential future (Shrage 2002). Conversely, hope was expressed in terms of government as the Biden administration was coming into office at the time of the interview and in terms of on the ground activism as it has become more inclusive and popularized:

It's not just about being pro-choice anymore. It's more about access and providing all people with access – and being inclusive. It was just a few years ago that [reproductive rights discourse] was very gendered and now you talk about pregnant people, not just pregnant women. It has definitely become stronger in that aspect, because we are now advocating for larger groups of people and addressing the problem head-on. Once you understand the full spectrum of an issue, you become more knowledgeable in how to overcome or begin to fix it. (Jess, interview 2020)

Effective activism tactics perceived by participants were social media (Elsa, interview 2020) and community-based education for enacting political change (Amelia, interview 2020). In Jess's answer, she offered a personal story, which was a part of her response for best activism tactics:

Community organizing and finding joy in the work we do is the most effective. Forming a community and having people that are all working toward the same issues, but we practice self-care, and we advocate for each other. We really create a voice with one another, and that is one of the most powerful tools we can have against the oppressor. There is really no room for compromise or to appease the moderates. It is the time to advocate for radical change. It is much needed and long overdue. It is not the time to be conservative in terms of what you think is appropriate to say. Recently, I was working on a campaign in Colorado to defeat a proposition, Proposition 115, which was targeting abortion late in pregnancy. The proposition would have banned abortion after 22 weeks of pregnancy with no exceptions for the pregnant person's health, lethal fetus diagnosis, or if the pregnancy was rape or incest. It's super important to bring in the voices and stories of people who have gone through experiences to humanize what is happening and to really show what the repercussions are of banning abortion. The reality is people will die. So, you elevate these stories -- in the campaign, we had people come forward and share their stories about accessing abortion later in pregnancy. Most of them were people who wanted to have a baby, but there were complications that didn't arrive until later in pregnancy. That's why they had to make that decision so late in the pregnancy – and that happens! Everyone's situation is so different. We bring up those stories and elevate those people and really show why we are advocating for this particular issue. So, when you have people who are just thinking about it conceptually, they don't understand the reality of how it affects specifically BIPOC, low-income people, and young people, especially. Storytelling is one of the strongest tools in the reproductive justice movement. (Jess, interview 2020)

Informed by embodied theory, bodily experiences must be validated in two ways – with both universal, human rights-based claims and more nuanced, difference-based claims speaking to intersectionality to support accounts of reproductive oppression to lead to identification with reproductive justice. These findings reinforce the work of material feminism, calling for focus on the experiences of bodies as they move through the world (Combellick-Bidney and Genis 2018). Storytelling and listening is a one way to embody and celebrate feminist goals, especially in shedding light on personal experiences of biopower. Reproductive justice and material feminism reject of post-structuralist theories that regard the body as constructed solely through social interaction, ignoring the experiences in the stuff of bodies (tissues, substance, materiality). With emphasis on the intersectional experiences of individuals throughout, reproductive justice and material feminists are demonstrating in theory and practice that different histories and oppressions shape the experiences of bodies, and liberation may take various forms (Combellick-Bidney and Genis 2018).

Experiences with Reproductive Rights Activism

Each of the participants knew about my thesis topic, work, and interest in reproductive justice. I was curious about the work they had done within the same realm. They each shared experience working on reproductive rights issues and general encounters with burnout related to feminist work as well as their notions around resilience.

“I was in a big organization against sexism and we gave out condoms. I took a lot of classes on this topic. Writing my thesis made me learn a lot – it is on prostitution” (Penelope, interview 2020). Elsa told me about the sex education policy analysis she did for a social policy class the semester prior at California State University, Northridge and expressed sentiments of burnout:

It covered sex education in middle and high school, which requires each student take sex education once in middle school and in high school and parental or guardian consent for the student to be excused. This is the policy in the United States, but each state has put their own laws into place. In California, it is required that each district teaches the same sex education. I believe it is only eighteen states that require every school district to teach sex education in middle school and high school. During the internship [at FMF], I wanted to do more for the actual internship, but I was also doing advocacy on my campus, as well. I was president of a club in which we advocate for reproductive rights and affirmative consent. I was doing that and felt like that was a lot. Sometimes I felt like, what am I really going to change? I hope I actually change something. I hope I actually do something to help shift people's opinions on reproductive healthcare and the whole feminist movement – maybe just help someone out or give them resources. I always think, oh what am I doing? But then, I know what I am doing – it's just so much. [To mitigate burnout], I try to take a step back from everything, like close my laptop and I turn off my phone to try to disconnect, especially from social media. The minute I get on my phone, I feel like social media is a stressor, as well. I just try to relax. (Elsa, interview 2020)

Jess, along with the responsibility of working as the internship coordinator, supervisor, and working on the Feminist Campus project, she also worked on the NCAP at FMF. I had seen her in action on much of this work at FMF, and I was excited to hear what she had been up to since we had last seen each other some months prior in Los Angeles:

I was working on the campaign in Colorado to defeat the abortion ban. It was a student-led effort. This was primarily digital, because of COVID, so we had social media accounts that we were running. We were trying to reach as many students as possible, because again, primarily young people are affected by this, so that's even more of a reason to provide access to abortion later in pregnancy. You might have young people whose parents don't agree with it or they are in a situation where their parents cannot know, further delaying access to their care. If someone is younger than 18, they might have to ask for parental consent. It's those barriers that young people go through. That's why it was so important to me, to advocate for abortion later in pregnancy, compared to when I first started learning about abortion access. Then, I thought it was to a certain point, but then you start learning more. It's important to hear those stories from people and what they have to say. You realize this is something that affects a huge group of people, so we shouldn't be making it harder for them to access that care. (Jess, interview 2020)

Amelia, also through FMF, had worked with The Pad Project on the documentary “Period: End of Sentence.” which was screened across film festivals in 2018. The film premiered

on Netflix in 2019 and won an Academy Award the same year. “It’s a short film about how the period is treated in India. It discusses the shame around women’s health, how it’s not talked about -- the ‘hush, hush’ makes it taboo” (Amelia, interview 2020). The documentary follows women of the Kathikhera village outside of New Delhi, India as they install a machine that makes the first pads many menstruating people in their community will use and work together to provide their community and themselves with improved menstrual health products.

Jess, Amelia, and Penelope also shared their feelings of burnout in feminist work followed by their means of self-care to mitigate it:

Physically, it’s a lot of fatigue and exhaustion while still having the mind constantly working. Once you’re off the clock, you’re still thinking about the issue and it’s still there – seeing it on the news and reading about it – because you’re conscious! You want to be in the loop of what’s going on and know how to help. It’s just a heavy burden to carry sometimes. I think that’s why it’s so important for us to celebrate the wins. If we don’t do that, we are going to be upset all the time and that’s depressing. Sometimes, I get upset, I get very angry. I’ll be on social media and feel like, why aren’t people talking about this? It is so important. I am starting to come to terms with the fact that it’s okay to disconnect and to take some time for yourself before you go back into it. Self-care hasn’t always been something that people advocated for, but now more than ever and especially in the feminist movement, we need to practice self-care. Because I get to work with students, I’m constantly feeling energized and excited because younger people will be the ones making decisions about our future, so when I see that the future is anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, advocating for climate change, advocating for immigrant rights – I see that and it inspires me. That is one thing that helps to keep me going to see passionate young people working toward making a better future. I know that’s not the case in everyone’s line of work, but maybe reading up on what young people are doing and seeing how they are pushing the limits and advocating for radical change. It’s filling your mind with, again, those wins. (Jess, interview 2020)

I think about how we are going to keep battling this stuff. It can sometimes feel like an uphill battle. It’s exhausting, but when we surround ourselves with people who are also working on it and focus on the progress we are making together, it gives you the drive to keep going. In general, I try to look for the successes that we have had and talk to other people that care about those issues to see that other people do really care and it’s not just one voice screaming into the void. We are in this together. (Amelia, interview 2020)

[Feeling burnout] is kind of recent, like since the internship at FMF and working on my thesis. Sometimes it just feels like again, again, again people don’t understand things. You think it would be more clearly supported by everybody, but then there are all kinds of

people who say, for example, women should be in the home, or whatever. You think there will be progress, but there will always be people like that. What makes me really angry is when I hear people, like parents or teachers, saying things that are so harmful and outdated to children. How do I deal with these feelings? Red wine... No, I mainly talk to my friends. They are interesting and feminists and always have some good news to remind me of – even just reminding me of the progress made in the last ten years.... and red wine! (Penelope, interview 2020)

Subsequently, the topic I chose to pivot to in my interview formatting as a follow up to burnout was on the topic of resilience. Amelia, Elsa, and Jess shared their perceptions of the term. “Resilience is the ability to bounce back when facing adversity, to be able to say it’s okay that this isn’t going the way I wanted and let me do what I need to do to get my head right to keep plowing forward instead of getting lost in the situation and beating yourself into the ground” (Amelia, interview 2020). “Resilience can be defined as to keep going even if things get tough. If something goes wrong, I will recover, I will keep going, no matter how long it takes, to get what I want” (Elsa, interview 2020).

Resilience comes in many forms. It can be if you are a person of color in a situation where you can’t be yourself because of fear of the oppressor and how you’ll be treated, but you find a way to bring joy to a situation when you’re being oppressed -- it’s a win. You are resilient in trying to preserve your identity and who you are living in this world. Celebrating your diversity who you are is resiliency in my eyes. (Jess, interview 2020)

Abortion Ban Headlines and Beyond

I had just presented my graduate research proposal to study reproductive rights within the feminist context of Peru in 2019 when headlines of an “abortion ban” lit up every screen I owned. It took me about a week of fear and rage, which made focusing on studying any other topic challenging, before I decided to channel that emotion into my graduate studies and change my research topic. I asked the participants of this study about their recollection and reactions to this specific attack on reproductive rights. As this is the inspiration for my research, I have left their answers unedited to speak fully for themselves:

I do recall my reaction. I remember I was confused because I was a freshman here [at CSUN], so I wasn't familiar with all of the reproductive rights advocacy that had been going on or exactly what was happening with the abortion bans. I didn't get a lot of education on it all before, especially in high school, so I didn't understand it. I was like, why would something be taken away that's needed? I was so confused and shocked that opinions could have that much power over a huge portion of the population in the United States and just take their rights away. I saw pushback and a lot of people speaking up on their social media platforms. In class, we started talking about how that could affect a lot of people. I also saw a divide between a lot of the states. Certain states, like California, were against the bans, but then some other states on the conservative side were agreeing [with the bans]. I feel it caused a lot of division, adding even more to [the tension of] Trump's presidency and his effect on the country and marginalized groups, definitely including women. Everyone deserves free access to reproductive healthcare, like abortions. Even if you don't have insurance, you still deserve the right to an abortion no matter what. Also, anti-abortion protests should be banned from outside and clinics. (Elsa, interview 2020)

Disgust, absolute disgust. It is incredible how every step forward we make, some guys come in and tramples all the work we've done in the blink of an eye. There is a page on Instagram, I can't remember what it's called, I think @reprorights, but they post a lot of my updates on that. They create lawsuits to try to challenge it, which is good. It is really frustrating, though, to see how they just rollback everything we have spent years organizing and trying to get together in the first place. I think you are taking away all of [someone's] rights when you tell them they don't have the right to an abortion. You are stopping them from being able to continue their education or choose a healthy relationship with a better partner if they want one. Life choices are taken when you take away the right to abortion. The first thing I guess we would have to do is make sure that rollbacks aren't going to happen. The next thing would be to start getting clinic access for people. Until we get rid of the policies that are stopping that, we can't make too much progress. (Amelia, interview 2020)

I was shocked. Trump was already a big surprise, like I was not thinking that would happen, and when this conversation about reproductive rights and abortion happened, I was surprised by it too. I was thinking maybe the checks and balances would immediately stop something like that and I was shocked that it could go even this far. I remember there were a lot of arguments, which I mostly saw on social media. Maybe it helps to put this subject into debates and that might be a way for people to progress in their knowledge about this topic. It is more dangerous for people to get abortions if it is not legal. This is dependent on inequality, too, because a rich woman is more likely to be able to go to another country and get a safe abortion, while a poor woman might try to do it by herself with high risks or is unable to do it at all. If a child is then born into a situation without money, more and more financial inequality happens. This also tells people that their uterus is under the control of people who don't have a uterus and their choices. In the U.S., I don't know everything about it, but maybe just stop banning abortions and limiting abortion access. Really punish the anti-choice protesters outside of clinics. For Europe, I don't think anybody would take away abortion or reproductive rights as of right now, but we need to talk about this topic more. Like for younger people,

they need to get a better education on reproductive rights. In Germany, though, it is bad. Doctors can refuse to provide abortions based on their religious beliefs. That's a bad country in Europe for reproductive rights, I don't know why, because Germany is so progressive in other ways but not this. (Penelope, interview 2020)

Really disappointed that this is still even a conversation we are having. Especially because abortion access wasn't an issue before because people have been doing it so long. It's a part of healthcare. It became an issue when midwives were performing abortions and they were taking over the male-dominated medical field. It didn't become a problem until Republicans realized they could win the Christian vote by advocating against abortion. It's weaponized and it's not even about being for life. It's not. It's very hateful, and you hear the rhetoric that is used, and it's rooted in white supremacy, racism, and colonialism. The first people who would be affected by more restrictions are those living rurally and with low incomes. There are many people who cannot take care of a child because of financial reasons or due to abusive situations. There are so many possible circumstances that we don't think about unless we have to go through them first-hand. There is an argument that the only people who advocate for abortion access are the ones who have had or want one. Well, yeah! They understand what it means to feel like you're going to lose control over your life. We should all have that bodily autonomy. Without the freedom to make decisions about your own body, you're not free. I noticed that within activism there was a shift from saying pro-choice to pro-abortion. A couple of years ago, I feel like it was shunned upon to say [pro-abortion] because it was considered something negative. We have come to a point now, though, where we need to acknowledge all of the situations and everyone's unique circumstances. For some people, it's not a bad thing, it can be much needed relief, and we shouldn't shame people. It's not a bad thing. Like anything else, it's healthcare, and we should be able to access it. Everybody should be able to access that with compassionate, judgment-free providers. I want to see states protect abortion access if Roe v. Wade were overturned – that's the main thing. Also, advocating for medication abortion to be more easily accessible. It is safe, it's safer than Viagra. People, especially people in rural areas, should be able to just order it. In California, in 2024, we will have medication abortion available in student health centers. Again, primarily young people are affected by the abortion bans. That's another thing, too, focusing directly on the groups that are affected and providing access for them as much as there is access for rich white women who are able to seek an abortion from a judgement-free provider. Again, going back to my point about how republicans used the abortion discussion to get votes, but I am sure they have family members or friends or know somebody who has had the procedure. (Jess, interview 2020)

Visions for the Future

Each conversation I had with the participants in the interview process of my research was an informative pleasure to take part in. We finished the conversations on the question I had been most excited to ask. I wanted to know their visions for a feminist future in order to know more

about the world we are all cocreating in this movement. I began by broadly asking about hope – if they subscribe to it and, if so, what their hopes for the future look like. Subsequently, I inquired about how they foresee the evolution of feminism and what they think the next steps, immediate and long-term, in the feminist and reproductive justice movements ought to be.

I hope for so many things! I hope the younger generations step up and for everyone to realize that there is great change needed, especially on the legislative level, for us to have true equality, even though it will be hard... and actually have the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] implemented. Hope is definitely needed because hope is a big motivator, especially within big social movements like this.

There will be a shift in society's idea of feminism. The issues pursued by the feminist movement change with time and the generations. I want more of an intersectional approach, especially in education, because that is not always taught right away. You only see the white feminist perspective of it, for example, with the books that are assigned, presentations that are given, or the topics that are discussed. Sometimes you don't see the perspective of a trans woman or the perspective of a Black woman in the United States. The education should definitely be more intersectional even in high school. Learning women's history should be more inclusive.

Immediate next steps – since there is a pandemic going on, there should be a greater reach for the resources that can be accessible during a pandemic, because it is really hard for people to get reproductive resources right now. Long-term – change on the legislative level for each state to start taking action for the specific issues that the people are trying to advocate for and take that seriously, like make policy changes and implement changes for schools and communities. (Elsa, interview 2020)

I hope we can at least get our basic healthcare rights. This is ridiculous. You see the racial inequality so much right now and that definitely affects abortion access too. In certain communities there is no access. I hope to get our most basic healthcare taken care of soon – to start seeing people as people. In the long term, hopefully we won't have to worry about all of these issues. Hopefully there's no "Oh, I'm a feminist," because hopefully everyone is a feminist. Hopefully everybody cares about everybody. Should be easy, should be obvious. You always have to have the hope that things are going to improve in the future and that we are making progress and the younger generation grows up with people and parents that try to inspire them to do the right thing. A lot of the protests that are going on right now, and the political movements, high schoolers are doing that. When you see high school kids really caring about reproductive access and equality for everybody, it does give you that hope that in the future these issues are not going to be issues at all. I started to get involved in politics in college and now middle schoolers and high schoolers are so active, that gives me hope for a better future.

[Feminism] changes with the times and with what the issues are at the time because the world is constantly changing. New problems come up. A hundred years ago, we didn't know about climate change and didn't see the issue like we do now. As new issues come up, we are going to treat them differently and with new theoretical approaches. People are trying to be more intersectional and see intersectional identities, but I see a lot of

people not really examining their privilege which is a problem in a lot of movements. Many feminist organizations are being critiqued for white feminism as people. These places will say they include everybody, but they don't really know how to practice what they are saying. Just calling yourself a feminist doesn't give you a free card that you are a good person now. We have to constantly learn and grow and do better. In the feminist movement right now, we are really focused on racial equality. I am hoping we can make huge strides there so people can even understand that they have privilege through education and start to understand how systemic racism works. We cannot dismantle white supremacy and systemic racism until people understand how our societies function around these concepts and start voting accordingly. I hope our next big thing is getting someone else in the White House. By the time we have grandchildren who are activists, I think there will be a whole new set of issues, and the issues we are dealing with right now, most of them will be further developed. There is always improvement. If you even just watch movies from when I was a kid versus now and look at the way women are represented or how different racial groups are represented, there is a huge difference only in ten years. Policy change and stopping the rollbacks need to be the next steps for reproductive rights access. Long-term, we have to get more clinics in more locations. It's like red-lining, and voter suppression where politicians put one polling location in areas where they know they won't get very much support. Same goes for abortion clinics – when you start getting more locations, start making it accessible for people, like within fifteen miles, that would be amazing. A huge issue is the need to vote in local politics and elections, it's not just the presidential election, because the issues are on the ground. Getting people to vote is the next big thing. You can start to see young high schoolers and people now starting to vote more from a younger age and understanding the necessity in that. We are making progress. Hopefully we start making some policy changes because we cannot make that much progress until we start making it real in the policies. (Amelia, interview 2020)

I hope that people learn equality really young and that in maybe fifty years, all people are feminists. Like, it's not a thing anyone asks, because of course you are. Of course I have hope; I want to work in women's rights. If I have no hope, there is no way to do that. I think if you want to work in feminism, you have to have hope. I think there is a new feminism. There are a lot of different feminisms. People criticize all parts of the movement even from within [the movement]. I think the movement should not so openly critique the differences within the movement and try to focus on what goals we all agree on and work on that. It is okay that we don't all agree. Radical feminists don't need to agree with abolitionists about sex work for example, and it's okay, we can all fight for equality in the wage gap for example. In the US, it might take time, but a major focus should be on abortion rights. It's a big public health issue and there cannot be a ban on all abortions. Instead, ban the anti-choice protesters outside of the clinics. Long-term, I think it's more based on theory, but changing the mentality of everyone, which is long work, but hopefully feminist is the only way to be, and everyone will truly be equal. Well, about reproductive rights, I think the US handles it badly. Not the feminist movement, but the country. Like I said, it is really surprising that we still have to talk about and defend this in the US, but that's not the US people, it's the government and some people. But that is not happening in France, like I don't know of anybody in particular who would directly

tell me they are against abortion. Some [people] might not want to have one, but nobody wants to take that option from anyone else. (Penelope, interview 2020)

With the situation we are in right now, I hope that we can come together and acknowledge that now is the time to advocate for human rights and be compassionate with one another, because if we don't have that, what do we have? We would have chaos and hate and these forces that are trying to tear entire groups of people down. I think once we all come to the realization that we should all be protecting each other, especially people of color, LGBTQ folks, trans folks – anybody who is part of a marginalized community – they are the ones that are coming together and pushing for change and pushing for a better day. We have to have hope, because if we don't, what's the point of fighting for change? I think that sometimes our hope gets clouded because we are so caught up with thinking about everything that's going on and not celebrating the things that are changing for the better. Having hope really provides the drive for folks to be in this line of work and continue to keep fighting in advocating for change.

*It's funny you bring that up, [feminism being a tool for evolution even unto itself]. I just went to this bookstore, and I found *Our Bodies, Ourselves* [by The Boston Women's Health Book Collective], which I read in my undergrad my freshman year, so I bought it, but as soon as I started reading it, I realized, wow, this is really gendered. Especially with abortion access, it was talking about how one in three women access abortion healthcare. You already see that change from talking specifically about one identity, whereas now, we are acknowledging that it's not just women who need this care – there are trans men and non-binary folks. That's just a couple of years, like I'm turning twenty-four. There has been such a change in such a short number of years. I went to a panel on Zoom, and there was an advocate, a trans woman, and she was talking about how there has been a recent change for trans people in terms of access and protections. You see how quickly at the governmental level things can change, but also social activism and the sentiment around different issues. It is ever evolving because there is always room for us to grow and become more inclusive of people's identities. I still feel like it's very white-dominated, and there is still a divide between different identities, especially for women of color. There are third-wave feminist organizations that are still around, and there are a lot of issues within those organizations. I feel like there is definitely the issue of centering the white experience within the movement.*

I think the biggest thing with Black Lives Matter coming into mainstream conversation is that organizations and people who are doing the work need to be pro Black Lives Matter, pro racial equity, racial justice, and be specific about what steps you're taking to advocate for black folks, because if you're not doing that, then your work is only advocating for a few groups of people. I think one of the biggest things is taking the step to make a plan, especially for organizations. What are you going to do to hire more people of color in leadership positions? What are you going to do to hire more black and indigenous people? Truly be representative of the communities that you say you are advocating for. Especially with the reproductive rights and justice movement, you see there is still that conversation around being able to have a right to an abortion rather than having access to an abortion. For some people, there is still the notion of it being women-centered versus being more inclusive of all pregnant people. First of all, being able to critique different systems and power structures, be able to advocate to overturn them, and change them into something that's with the times versus what has traditionally

been considered appropriate. I feel like once we are there, we are at a true marker of moving closer to equality.

We should be continuing the conversation and advocating for a future with radical change with things looking completely different. Traditionally, people have felt afraid of change and seeing things a different way, so if we can expand our minds to manifest what things should look like, then it's possible to see a future where people are not being oppressed or where everybody is treated with dignity and respect. (Jess, interview 2020)

There are as many ways to equitably embody feminist activism as there are people and communities. In this work, I discuss that which pertains to my research, from my positionality, as I moved through the Los Angeles area during the early months of 2020. Interviews make this perspective bloom. On the importance of imaginations for the future: as a prolific activist and dear friend of mine, Rosemary, has so eloquently expressed to me as well as publicly, “It is never enough to just be against something. One must fill that ideological void with an adequate replacement, or what you reject WILL mutate and regain its original place.” I propose a politics of hope not to push notions of happiness, excitement, or toxic positivity, but rather to offer a means of courageous fortitude on our quest toward justice which requires creativity, integrity, and discipline.

Voices, struggles, memories stoke and heal anger, longing, animating and inspiring survival and revolution. Potentiality, capacity, creativity: realizing one's potential and capacity and creativity; a society organized to motivate potentiality, capacity and creativity; a society where difference is capable of potential healing, its capacity embraced not feared, honored not targeted, set free rather than imprisoned. This is Black radical tradition, the decolonial imaginary, freedom dreams: recognizing that we are our own wellspring of inspiration, our own memory of struggle, our own creative spirit to commune and resist, live and honor the dreams of dignity we carry in our hearts to make real in our lives. (Gómez 2013)

Today, a random Wednesday at lunch about a month into my internship, my heart ignited with inspiration. It is common for FMF to have the occasional catered lunch with a guest affiliated with FMF or with aligned goals. Last week, FMF endorsed California State Assembly candidate Vanessa Tyson joined us for one of these lunches to share her goals for bettering education, the housing crisis, and environmental protection. It was very nice to meet her. When Dr. Kakenya Ntaiya joined us for lunch today, I met an individual who is, by my definition, a superhero. In 2008, Dr. Ntaiya founded Kakenya's Dream, a non-profit that utilizes education for girls' empowerment and to end the practices of female

genital cutting and child marriage. This organization continues to make incredible change in rural Kenyan communities, serving thousands of children. Learning about Dr. Ntaiya and her work feels like the culmination of my utmost theoretical dreams that I have constructed through academia suddenly personified and standing in front of me. Throughout the lunch, I was flooded with images of a future in which I could support this kind of work in my career, my dreams dancing with Kakenya's Dream. I would have looked ridiculous with the smile that was plastered on my face, food hardly touched, as I was enraptured by this wonderful person's story and presence if it were not for the fact that everyone else in the room, all of FMF's in-office staff and interns, seemed wildly honored to be in Dr. Ntaiya's orbit, as well. Inspiration, as it spreads like wildfire, is a transcendental state. Kakenya's Dream was once a dream, now a reality. Hearing about this work and meeting the person who drew the blueprint and set it into motion felt like nothing short of a spiritual experience. I am capable of similar transformation in the world, or better, we are capable of it. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

Art as Fuel

One of the first things that struck me about this space [at FMF], other than the warmth and inspiration I feel from the people around me, was the art. The art in the office is lively and affects me as a tool for morale – how far we have come, what FMF has contributed to the feminist movement and collaborations as well as the need to keep fighting: motivation. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

Recognizing structural and institutional violences as technologies of governmentability, we have the opportunity to turn to alternative epistemological frameworks and methods for social justice. Imagination enables us to approach, intuit, and engage our world in articulating a collective rather than an individual impulse toward the constitution of less violent polities and communities. Applied poetics can be used as a tool to allow bodies to tell of their stories, intensities, and becomings to move beyond the focus of 'the rational scientific logic' of nationalist history as written by our departments of education or other ruling elites or states that appropriate and build on communal resources. (Agathangelou and Killian 2006)



Figures 4 and 5: FMF office art (photo credit: Tuttle, Nicolette)

Figure 4 is a small gallery of Rock for Choice memorabilia art. Rock for Choice was a decade long annual concert event that began in 1991 as a pro-abortion rights benefit organized by L7, an all-female rock band from Los Angeles, and Sue Cummings, music editor for the *LA Weekly* alternative newspaper. The benefit concert was born in reaction to anti-choice violence and clinic bombings in the early 1990's and evolved into an organization that FMF came to manage.

Figure 5, artist unknown, is a piece listing many identifiers, most of them paradoxical in the context of being grouped together. The final words of the piece say, “i’m your lover i’m your lover i’m your lover lover lover lover”; all the text is superimposed on a human form target shooting poster. This is a piece I spent time contemplating daily at the FMF office. While there are countless possible interpretations, I understand this piece to speak to the violence that is justified by terror and hate. That feeling is positioned between people by many factors – power dynamics, cultural conditioning, etc. – all the while, different relations among people represent

different sentiments and actions. Ultimately, your lover is constituted of attributes that somebody else abhors to the point that could incite violence. I continue to be moved by this piece and its profound commentary on gun violence, the attempted justifications for it, and the world-making/breaking power of love.

Art was a recurring theme during my research. I was moved by the art in the office and around Los Angeles from music to street art to theater and more. I found myself going to as many art galleries, museums, and creative spaces as I could in my free time. I had always considered myself to be an artistic person and deeply appreciative of creativity in all forms; there was an insistence that art needed to play a role in my research. Eventually, I understood why I was hungry for art more than usual while doing this feminist work and research. Art was my therapeutic tool. It supported my overwhelm by reminding me that I was not alone in my raw, blossoming feelings as I reckoned with issues both pertaining to me and not, but which called on us to fight for our collective lives. In the same breath with which art offered me belonging, it whispered, “Keep going, everything beautiful is on the other side of your fear and fighting. There is honor in the process. Dare to see what is and imagine what could be.”

In the participant interviews, the visions for a better future that were articulated involved: compassion, equality, equity, respect, dignity, social and reproductive justice, environmental protection, celebration of diversity, celebration in general, inclusion, creativity, quality education early in life and throughout, normalization of currently held popular taboos around sexual and reproductive health, progressive policies, democratic participation, respect, autonomy, accessible and actualized human rights, grassroots change, listening to and supporting one another in community, healthy relationships of all kinds, informed decision-making, ethical leaders, inspired and active future generation of activists, the actualization of the ERA, feminism as the

norm, dismantled systems of oppression to make space for us to usher this reality in. As a researcher, it is necessary that I support as many of these qualities in my work (*life*) as possible from my loci. Throughout my data collection and reflection, it has only become more important to me that I honor the vulnerability and efforts of my participants, giving them a space to allow their imaginations and feelings to express freely through informed consent and collaborative research. Using artistic productions as an epistemological, pedagogical tool pushes us to ask reflexive questions about the intersubjective nature of present systems and relations as well as what kinds of reforms are required of us for the building of collaboratively informed nonviolent futures (Agathangelou and Killian, 2004) by opening discursive and conceptual space for alternative thinking.

My academic journey and preferred methodology continue to be deeply qualitative; this is a reflection of my mind. I knew that art was a way to convey sentiments and ideas that were too big, complex, and beautiful for the confines of language. I use art as an exploration of the *ultra-qualitative* – that which is filtered out by traditional qualitative research methods, a more emotive quality to the experiences of the participants of this research, myself included.

This kind of data presents further insight into tacit information, the heart of the matter as the emotional regulatory source of motivation to build the hopeful imaginary into reality. Art is a blueprint for future realities and the fuel to help us get there. Jess and Elsa graciously submitted their art to me, guided by the *ultra-qualitative* research methods I designed for this project: a photography exercise and a poetry exercise. In addition, I include an autoethnographic account of the art reflection exercise method.

Photography Exercise

Jess's photography exercise visually showcases her perspectives on feminist goals, reproductive justice, and personal meanings of feminism. She included descriptive captions for each of her six photos. The photos were taken with her iPhone and were emailed to me with their correlating captions:



1. "Burn it Down! True liberation requires that we envision a world outside of the dominant systems that currently exist. I strongly believe that to create real change, we will need a feminist revolution."



2. "WE MUST STAND UP AGAINST THE POLICE STATE."



3.
“I am feminist as fuck. I will always say this loudly and proudly.”



4.
“I ♥ my local abortion provider. It’s not enough to be pro-choice. We must work to create an environment where abortion is positively viewed as healthcare and abortion providers are not scrutinized. Reproductive justice means being PRO-ABORTION.”



- 5.

“This picture of me smiling represents the joy we must always look for within this work. Always celebrate the wins. Always find something good no matter how small. This is the only way we will survive doing this work.”



6.

“This is my visual representation of “self-care”. It is crucial to include a self-care routine for yourself to prevent burnout from the work you do for the movement. You cannot fight for justice if you aren’t prioritizing yourself first.” (Jess, photography exercise, 2020)

Poetry Exercise

Elsa participated in the poetry exercise by writing a poem about reproductive rights and produced it in a graphic design:



(Elsa, poetry exercise, 2020)

Art Reflection Exercise

I feasted on art during my time procuring this research. FMF is an activist hub of its own right, gaining me access to many events in the city – plays, collaborative mixers of all kinds, art shows, speaker events, the list goes on. I allowed the creative force to move me and shape my research, lifestyle, and thinking to my greatest collaborative abilities at the time. The feminist activist art produced by Jess and Elsa moved me for countless reasons that vary depending on the fluid influences of my personal life. Although my time spent gathering data for this project in Los Angeles teemed with art to the point of feeling swallowed by it in the most pleasurable of ways, perhaps it is the nature of genuine friendship and knowing Jess and Elsa personally that has allowed their pieces to steal the most of my contemplation. Here, I include an affective analysis in autoethnographic form, in response to their works.

Reflection on Jess's Photography Exercise

In Jess's art, the articulated visions for a better future from the interviews are compassion, equality, equity, dignity, social and reproductive justice, celebration, inclusion, creativity, quality education, normalization of currently held popular taboos around sexual and reproductive health, progressive policies, democratic participation, grassroots change, feminism as the norm, and dismantled systems of oppression to make space for us to usher this reality in.

In reflection of Jess's art, I initially see abolitionism coming through as well as a general radical stance on what must be done and the urgency with which it must happen. Jess has previously shared with me her passion for this work. In my view, she successfully embodies radical feminism, warmth, passion, a sense of inclusion and kindness, and patience in her diligence as a community member. She embodies an understanding that this work must be done immediately, although it cannot be without each other.

Image 1 and its caption reminds me of the Audre Lorde quote and essay, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” It also speaks to my stance on the need for visualizing new realities outside of existing inequitable power structures. I appreciate the order in which Jess presented these photos. Image 1 serves as a foundation for the following five images which, as a series, convey an impactful message. Image 2 punctuates the first image by providing an example of one of the systems, namely the police state, that cannot sustain throughout the revolution that would support a flourishing reality for everyone. Images 3 and 4, both buttons, are Jess’s declarations. Again, she sets the foundation of claiming her identity as a prolific feminist. Zoning in on reproductive justice, Jess claims the stance of being pro-abortion and names the importance of elevating the procedure into everyday conversation as something that is a normal and necessary part of healthcare. Image 5 and 6 highlight Jess’s personhood. She introduces herself visually with a picture of her smiling and restates her belief that celebration and joy within activist work sustains the work and may be seen as a form of self-care. Image 6 specifically represents one of her self-care practices of aromatherapy to support rest.

I understand Jess’s photography exercise to be images that are coupled in meaning: images 1 and 2 discuss revolution, images 3 and 4 present stances taken, and images 4 and 5 personalize the artist while sharing coping mechanisms for sustaining the work presented in images 1-4. By presenting the issue broadly and narrowing into the point of personalization and care, Jess reveals a hopeful case: she shows us not only the issues, but the mechanisms that make tackling the issue, as an individual, sustainable. She leads by example, embodying her own version of feminism in the face of needed revolution and reproductive justice, thus inspiring the onlooker that they are just of capable of revolutionary activism as well. Her personalization of this work touches the parts of me that can feel overwhelmed by these issues, reminding me that

there are others, just as human as I am, who are willing to share praxis for surmounting these issues while grounding me in the importance of these issues.

Reflection on Elsa's Poetry Exercise

In Elsa's "My Rights" poem, I identify the following points from the visions for the future named in the participant interviews: compassion, equality, equity, dignity, social and reproductive justice, inclusion, creativity, respect, autonomy, accessible and actualized human rights, grassroots change, listening to and supporting one another in community, informed decision-making, feminism as the norm, and dismantled systems of oppression to make space for us to usher this reality in.

In Elsa's art, she articulated affective, problematic experiences of hegemonic gender disparities, bodily autonomy, basic human rights, embodied sentiments, and marginalization. The way I experience this emotionally, as an individual appreciator of "My Rights", is by being swallowed by the validation of extremely loud frustrations. It is beautifully written and strikes a personal truth within me, as well. I enjoy reading this very much and feel what she is saying as much as I understand it. This sense of empathy is a vital component for being a true accomplice in the revolution with one another as we collectively work together to dismantle and build anew – to collaborate. There is a strong feeling of frustration that "My Rights" evokes. I experience this as a call to action. Discomfort is a motivator for change. In Elsa's claim of these rights as her own, there is agency and clear strength in the fight to fully own one's rights in the face of violent forces that mean to oppress basic rights to one's own body.

The messages in Jess and Elsa's pieces are pieces of art that, as Agathangelou and Killian (2006) suggest, can become tools for peace and can allow for subverting any notion that systems of oppression have any place on the way toward freedom through four major epistemological

commitments: the experience of violence as a starting point toward action, agency as we all participate in the creation of our communities through our similarities and differences alike, recognizing that our liberation is bound up with the liberation of privilege of ourselves and others enables us to work together toward the transformation of ourselves and realities, and the forging of critical solidarities which are based on shared values and visions.

As Audre Lorde (1983) reminds us:

The need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered. It is this real connection, which is so feared by a patriarchal world. For it is only under a patriarchal structure that maternity is the only social power open to [AFAB people]... It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those other identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

Institutional systems of inequality and oppression require intensely creative solutions for liberation, cultivated through revolutionary support for one another. Creativity and reflection offer apertures through which we can see, design, imagine, and cocreate realities that support goals of compassion, equality, equity, dignity, social and reproductive justice, inclusion, creativity, grassroots change, feminism as the norm, and dismantled systems of oppression to make space for us to usher this reality in. These characteristics are the visions for the future articulated in participant interviews that I see shared in both Jess and Elsa's art. Feminist activism continues to be a mode of collaborative survival. Reproductive justice is a viable design for collective liberation and a means for building futures in which we can celebrate diversity and allow intersectionality to be a creative strength through interdependence and reciprocity, rather than an exploitative dividing force.

Conclusion

Thesis Summary

The (in-person) internship is coming to a close much earlier than I had anticipated. COVID-19 is spreading and the FMF office here in L.A. is closed for at least two weeks, which is almost when my internship ends anyways. There are so many different rumors going around about what mandates might happen, it's best that I drive back to Washington in the next day or two and be close to my family. Penelope, Elsa, Amelia and I will finish our internships remotely. We celebrated our time together today, which was the last day at the office. Penelope baked a chocolate cake for everyone, and we shared a bottle of red wine in our cubicle area. Even with all the mixed feelings, the clearest thing I felt was support between us all. (excerpt from fieldnotes, 2020)

This thesis is about feminist activism in the face of anti-choice efforts. It was based on research conducted through L.A. For Choice clinic escort volunteer work and my internship at FMF, but also built research connections and collaborations through the NCAP. My participant-observation, interviews, and art-based research methods lay bare the barriers to reproductive autonomy. But it also provides a space for hopeful feminist praxis, and an emotive phenomenological insight for realizing current and future progressively equitable realities. Imaginative collaboration in conversation and art created space for thinking and feeling through solution-based possibilities.

Reflexivity requires that I address that is also a personal account of my ongoing feminist process to reconcile my internal desires for a better world through scholar-activism. I suspect that part of my observation regarding the theme of hope is informed by my personal life circumstances that have punctuated this research. Two weeks before embarking on my trip to Los Angeles, my best friend, Megan, passed away suddenly. I threw myself heavily into this research, my internship, and volunteer work. When I came back to Washington at the onset of the pandemic, I entered a romantic relationship that revealed itself to be unhealthy for me. I lived with this ex-partner for about a year in order to keep my family safe and healthy, since my lease

was up at my apartment in Bellingham. Faced with immense grief for my friend, the world, and myself, there were months during which I did not write or approach my schoolwork which focused on yet another heavy topic. I was not eligible to receive money through unemployment, as many people relied on during the early months in the pandemic, because of the way my Teaching Assistantship at Western Washington University was interpreted by the state as a financial gift. I worked as a nanny, which also required that I work as a teacher due to virtual schooling. For months, my nervous system was dysregulated through bouts of depression and severe anxiety. I have since moved into a much healthier chapter of my life. The version of myself who once romanticized resilience and fighting tirelessly, fueled by love for the world, has changed. These days, I find myself valuing deep rest and asking for help when necessary, which is still fueled by love for the world. I see a need for fully participating in interdependence and reciprocity with renewed vision that I too must be dependent and receive support. This time in my life has humbled me, as great lessons tend to do. Hope has been my survival mechanism, thus influencing my research. Through this documentation of my situated observation (Haraway 1988), I reveal this research as a part of my process of self-transformation. This situated observation in the form of a thesis is not a research limitation, rather it is simply the way circumstances of this qualitative research came together on the basis of informed consent and collaboration with the research participants. One of my greatest lessons from the writing portion of this project is that there is no such thing as a complete ethnography, as my personal process is constantly evolving, it would be possible to keep refining this thesis in reflection.

U.S. opponents of abortion work to force AFAB people into birthing children and experience the severe emotional, physical, social, and financial consequences, all the while allowing little to nothing to prevent unwanted pregnancy via contraception and sex education

(Cianciarulo 2017). This research has served partially as a coping mechanism in the face of fear and outrage as people with reproductive anatomy similar to mine are presented with barriers to self-determination. As Justice Ginsburg recognized, abortion implicates "[an AFAB person's] autonomy to determine [their] life's course, and thus to enjoy equal citizenship stature"

(Keighley 2010). I do this for myself and the world, as we are intertwined in every way; none of us are free until all of us are free. Feminism, for me, must be a co-creative effort to dismantle all forms of oppression and build anew spaces for lives well lived. To really do this work of liberating ourselves and others, we must remember not to condemn individuals as we hold them accountable, while instead condemning the institutions that shape and produce identities of oppression. Repatriation of power over one's own life within a system of interdependence, reciprocity, and celebration of diversity is my goal, and this research process and thesis serve as an expression of that. This thesis offers a building block of understanding, outlining mechanisms toward that goal with participatory action, listening, and art as useful methods for this scholar-activist work and beyond. Reproductive justice is a necessary direction to move toward in order to support all people and requires as many of us as possible to participate politically, collaboratively offer our talents, listen and learn, and creatively manifest equitable realities. This is an account of my learning journey and co-participation in working toward a better world for all.

Directions for Future Research

This thesis supports future research that emphasizes higher levels of intersectional inclusion, collaboration, and participatory action. Research in doula work, birth control access, creative ethnographic or research methods, sex education, reproductive rights access for incarcerated or houseless people, fake abortion clinics, reproductive healthcare and insurance,

and international contexts of reproductive justice are potential avenues for further research beyond this work. May it be of service to you.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Subject: Graduate Student Research - early 2020

Hello,

My name is Nicolette Tuttle, and I am a graduate student working on my master's thesis in cultural anthropology at Western Washington University in Washington state. My research focuses on the current women's rights movement in this country, specifically concerning sexual and reproductive rights. I plan to conduct ethnographic research through a feminist approach in the coming months with participants affiliated with this movement. I am reaching out now in order to introduce myself and my intentions for this graduate-level research and to connect with you and inquire about the potential for collaborating with me in this research.

The objective of this ethnographic study is to explore the current approaches to activism and the advancement of social change as well as the personalized experiences of the women's rights movement in the United States for those actively involved and in association with your organization, if you would welcome my research.

Another goal of this research falls into a Participatory Action Research model, as my research design supports collaborative work with women's rights activists as co-producers of knowledge in order to come to an agreement on how my research could potentially benefit the participants and the overall movement. This could manifest in the form of policy recommendations to local political bodies, journalism pieces, extensive volunteer work, or whatever the research participants would prefer that I contribute in exchange for allowing me to learn from them – the possibilities are endless. The entire process would be transparent with the goal of mutual benefit. As a scholar-activist, I am excited by the notion of collaboration of efforts to create the necessary steps toward equality and empowerment.

The methods for qualitative data collection that I will be using for this study include ethnographic participant-observation, interviews, focus groups, photography, and poetry. Participants involved in this data collection will be kept anonymous and will be welcomed to participate as much or as little and in as many or few methods as they so choose. This study will maintain transparency throughout the entire process of data collection and data analysis and until the final results are published in my thesis.

I have attached the participation consent form that has been approved by my university's internal review board (IRB) in order to further outline how I plan to conduct my study and what participation might consist of. Collaboration, however, is the basis of my approach, so my plan is absolutely flexible. I truly admire the work your organization does; it would be an honor to focus my research through this lens.

I would love to discuss possible plans further with you over the phone. Please let me know when we could schedule a phone call!

Thank you so much for your time and have a lovely day!

Best,
Nicolette Tuttle
(425) 367-3770

Appendix B: IRB Consent Form

Western Washington University Consent Form

Participatory Action Research Study of the Feminist Movement and Reproductive Rights

Researcher: Nicolette Tuttle, Graduate Student
Phone: (425) 367-3770
Email: tuttlen2@wwu.edu

We are asking you to be in a research study. Participation is voluntary. The purpose of this form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to participate. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about anything that is not clear. When we have answered all of your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore the current approaches to activism and the attitudes based on the phenomenology of the feminist movement in the United States in response to the surge of abortion bans and limitations, as an effort to limit reproductive rights and control, sweeps across states. This study also means to grapple with mechanisms for advancing social change in partnership with an active organization focused on reproductive rights and its participants.

The ultimate goal is to amplify and contribute to the movement’s progress in whatever way the participants would like to collaborate with the researcher and collected data for the advancement of social change, likely in the form of written policy recommendations. The broader significance of the proposed study is to clarify and reinforce an acknowledgement that the advancement of feminist goals can only be strengthened through alliances. This thesis research may act as a foundation for other transformative projects in the future to promote women’s rights through collaborative efforts.

Study Procedures

Procedural methods for this study’s data collection may include ethnographic participant-observation, interviews, a focus group, photography, art collection and reflection, and ethnopoetry. This is the overall sequence of procedures, although participant-observation will be an ongoing data collection method.

Observation will be conducted by taking daily field notes with a pen and journal in the field and immediately expanding field notes, along with accounts of participation. Identifiers of

individuals will not be recorded or included. Observation will take place at the organization and public events.

Interview data will be produced through recorded interviews with participants and/or a focus group. The participants will each be given names other than their own for anonymity in the final thesis. If necessary, the researcher will conduct follow-up interviews that may be face-to-face, on the phone, or over Skype or FaceTime. Each interview will take up to half an hour to conduct. The focus group will take up to an hour. Participants may skip any question that they are not comfortable answering. After the interviews are transcribed, the researcher will have the interviewees look over and edit the data to ensure transparency and respectful collaborative efforts are met. The same measures will be met for the data collected from the focus group.

In addition, five participants will take up to ten photographs that represent their own perspectives on feminist goals/reproductive rights issues. The medium for photography will be disposable cameras that the researcher will provide. Photography could take less than an hour for the participants to take photos.

Participants of this research may write a single piece of free verse poetry about their feelings and experiences pertaining to women's rights. Poetry writing could take ten minutes. No prior knowledge or mastery of these creative, participant-produced data types are necessary.

Participants may also elect to share a piece of art in any form with the researcher along with a short reflection as to how the piece represents or evokes sentiments related to the feminist movement or reproductive rights goals for the participant.

Throughout the subsequent process of data analysis, the researcher will send drafts of the data analysis to the research participants for approval, editing, and continued collaboration in order to maintain transparency and fulfill mutual goals for this research endeavor.

Risks of Participation

Participants may be at risk for stress, discomfort, anxiety, and risks from breach of privacy. We take every precaution to protect participants' information, though no guarantee of security can be absolute. We believe the chances of participants being identified are low due to the protections in place for participants' privacy.

Benefits

Participatory Action Research is based on collaborative and ethical research methods and efforts for the co-creation of knowledge. It allows for guidance in development initiatives that benefit community issues -- political participation will aid in proper decision-making for social implications. The data from this proposed research may inform policy recommendations, co-written by the research participants and researcher, aimed to progress rights attainment for womxn.

Data Security & Protections

In this study, there will be a link to identifiers from the audio of recorded interviews and focus group. Participants will be given an ID number for this study, which will be used to label their data. The link between this ID number and participants' name and other identifying information will be stored separately. Identifiers will be kept for as minimal time as possible. The audio recordings from interviews and focus groups will be transcribed promptly and deleted after transcription. The transcriptions will be organized by coded ID numbers, rather than names or

other identifiable factors, to ensure anonymity. Once audio recordings are deleted, there will no longer be any record of identifiers.

There are times where studies are reviewed by Western Washington University to make sure that they are being conducted safely. In the event that this occurs, the reviewers will be responsible for protecting participants' privacy.

Withdrawal

Participants are free to withdraw from this study at any time, without penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are otherwise entitled. If a participant withdraws from the study, the study will delete your data.

Research Participants Rights

If you have concerns or questions about this research study, please contact Nicolette Tuttle at (425) 367-3770 or tuttlen2@wwu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Western Washington University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP) at compliance@wwu.edu or (360) 650-2146.

Alternatives to Taking Part in this Study

Participants may choose to participate in one or more of the procedural methods of this study. Please mark each circle you consent to participate in below.

- Observation
- Interview
- Focus Group Discussion
- Photography Exercise
- Poetry Exercise
- Art & Reflection Exercise

Consent

By signing below, you are saying that you have read this form, that you have had your questions answered, that you understand the tasks involved, and volunteer to take part in one or more tasks in this research.

Full Name

Signature

Date

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Thank you for your time! This should take about 30 minutes but may be either longer or shorter. You, the interviewee, are in control: let me know if you would like anything off the record or do not want to answer a question. The purpose of this interview is for me to analyze major themes about the feminist movement experience with individuals who have worked or are currently working within that sphere; some of my questions will narrow in more on opinions around reproductive rights, as well. Just so you know, this is going to be recorded so I can transcribe it

for my thesis, but I will delete the recording once it is transcribed. I will also send you the transcribed version of this conversation in case you would like to edit anything before I put this in my thesis.

Have you gotten a chance to read the consent form?

As mentioned in the consent form, I will be changing names of all participants to ensure anonymity. That being said, is there a specific name you would like to have?

Are you ready for me to begin recording?

As I have stated, the questions I will be asking you today are related to the feminist movement in the U.S. and reproductive rights issues in the U.S.

QUESTIONS:

What city do you currently live in?

1. How do you define feminism? Has your definition evolved since you first started learning about feminism?
2. Do you identify as a feminist? If yes, why?
3. What is your motivation for being a part of the feminist movement? Was there a specific area of rights issues that initially inspired you to get involved?
4. Do you have a favorite feminist thinker, activist, or artist?
5. What do you think is the general notion or sentiment about the feminist movement in the US for the average person living in the US?
6. What is your perception of the trajectory of reproductive rights in the US?
7. What do you think are some of the greatest barriers to reproductive rights in the US?
8. What tactics do you feel have proven to be most effective in the feminist movement? How about regarding reproductive rights?
9. The Trump era abortion bans hit the news in the spring of 2018. Several states had taken action to curb abortion rights as conservatives and anti-choice groups attempted to force the Supreme Court to reexamine abortion access. Do you recall your reaction? Did you witness shifts in the feminist movement in response to the abortion bans?
10. Are there specific reproductive rights policy changes you hope to see in the near future?

11. What kind of sex education have you received in school? What city did you get this education in?
12. How do you think sex ed plays into this country's reproductive rights?
13. What do you think banning or limiting abortion access would mean?
14. Have you personally worked on anything pertaining to sexual or reproductive rights? If so, do you feel comfortable sharing what that work was/is?
15. Do you ever experience burnout related to feminist work or activism? If yes, how do you mitigate burnout?
16. How do you define resilience?
17. As a feminist, what do you hope for? Is hope something you subscribe to in the realm of social movements?
18. Feminism is partially known as a theory used for problematizing or critiquing as a means for intersectional progress. Do you see feminism as a self-evolving theory and practice? Do you have current critiques of the movement?
19. What do you envision as the next immediate and long-term steps in the movement as well as reproductive rights?
20. That wraps up my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add to this conversation?

Thanks so much for your time! I will email you the first draft of this transcribed conversation soon in case there are any edits you would like to make.