

The Fourth Wave of Feminism in Brazil

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Abstract: *The research approaches Fourth-Wave Feminism in Brazil using some strategies. First, its characteristics were highlighted according to authors who write on the subject. Subsequently, we analyzed some of these characteristics (the presence in the digital environment, the defense of more than one agenda and the way they are being organized) based on data collected on all the pages of feminist organizations (114) registered on a digital social network (Facebook). Based on the results, we argue that contemporary feminisms are part of a fourth wave characterized by mobilization via digital media, adoption of intersectionality and organization in the form of collectives. In addition to pointing out traits of contemporary feminisms, the study problematizes the novelty and homogeneity sometimes associated with the fourth wave and its characteristics.*

Keywords: *feminism; fourth wave; social movements; collectives; intersectionality.*

A quarta onda feminista no Brasil

Resumo: *A pesquisa aborda a quarta onda feminista no Brasil por meio de algumas estratégias. Primeiro foram destacadas suas características conforme autoras que dissertam sobre o tema. Posteriormente analisamos algumas dessas características (a presença no meio digital, a defesa de mais de uma pauta e a forma como estão se organizando) com base em dados coletados em todas as páginas de organizações feministas (114) cadastradas em uma rede social digital (Facebook). Com base nos resultados, argumentamos que os feminismos contemporâneos fazem parte de uma quarta onda caracterizada no trabalho pela mobilização via meios de comunicação digitais, adoção da interseccionalidade e organização em forma de coletivos. Além de apontar traços dos feminismos contemporâneos, o texto problematiza a novidade e a homogeneidade por vezes associadas à quarta onda e às suas características.*

Palavras-chave: *feminismo; quarta onda; movimentos sociais; coletivos; interseccionalidade.*

La cuarta ola feminista em Brasil

Resumen: *La investigación aborda la cuarta ola feminista en Brasil a través de algunas estrategias. En primer lugar, se destacaron sus características según autoras que hablan sobre el tema. Posteriormente, analizamos algunas de estas características (su presencia digital, la defensa de más de una agenda y la forma en que se están organizando) a partir de datos recogidos en todas las páginas de organizaciones feministas (114) registradas en una red social digital (Facebook). Con base en los resultados, argumentamos que los feminismos contemporâneos son parte de una cuarta ola caracterizada por la movilización a través de los medios digitales, la adopción de la interseccionalidad y la organización en forma de colectivos. Además de señalar rasgos de los feminismos contemporâneos, el texto problematiza la novedad y la homogeneidad a veces asociadas a la cuarta ola y sus características.*

Palabras clave: *feminismo; cuarta ola; movimientos sociales; colectivos; interseccionalidad.*

Introduction

This research focuses on Fourth-Wave Feminism, sometimes considered to be a new stage in the fight for women's rights. The authors argue that contemporary feminisms are part of a fourth wave because they have adopted, among other characteristics, mobilization via digital media, intersectionality and organization in the form of collectives.

In Brazil and in other countries, the history of feminist movements is reported as if it were structured in waves (cf. Céli PINTO, 2003; Marlise MATOS, 2010). The division of feminisms into waves is a way of defining the characteristics and emphases of a specific time, according to a chronological separation of events (Daniela Rocha DRUMMOND, 2020). In Brazil's case, the first wave would be characterised by the achievement of women's suffrage in 1932; the second would demand more rights, including political ones, within the context of the military dictatorship; the third would be marked by the institutionalization of participation in the feminist movement.

Whichever wave they were part of, however, more recent studies have pointed to a series of characteristics specific to contemporary feminisms, such as: the creation of multiple alliances with other social sectors, which translates into so-called intersectional feminism (MATOS, 2010), internationalization (DRUMMOND, 2020), the return to the streets and to organizational autonomy (Sonia ALVAREZ, 2014), and organization in the form of collectives (Flávia RIOS; Olivia Cristina PEREZ; Arlene RICOLDI, 2018). Such characteristics must be understood within the context of increasing internet use (Heloisa BUARQUE DE HOLLANDA, 2018; DRUMMOND, 2020). Authors such as Matos (2010), Buarque de Hollanda (2018) and Drummond (2020) use the term fourth wave to describe the changes in contemporary feminisms.

The term fourth wave has not only been adopted by academics, but also by activists and journalists (DRUMMOND, 2020). And its use is not exclusive to Brazil; the denomination is also used by several news outlets outside the country and feminist activists around the world to understand this new phase of feminism (DRUMMOND, 2020).¹ Despite the presence of this discussion outside Brazil, this paper focuses on the analysis of fourth-wave feminism according to academic studies and Brazilian feminist organizations.

The concept of waves is used as a means to analyze the possible patterns of development of a given social movement (Colin BARKER, 2014). Although it is widely used and taken as self-evident, the similarity of this concept with that of cycles of protest cannot be denied. According to Sidney Tarrow (1994), the cycle of protests is equivalent to a phase of intensification of conflicts in which public protest gains strength, which allows the movement to become widespread in various sectors of society, including those less mobilized. However, for critics of this concept, for example Barker (2014), the term cycle may be considered inappropriate as the so-called waves of protest do not seem to follow a cyclical pattern or economic trajectory.

However, the idea of waves often ends up including in a single homogenizing layer the inherent diversity of the issues tackled by feminist activists (ALVAREZ, 2019). The literature even warns of the fluidity of the waves, that is, the fact that they do not end exactly from one year to the next, in addition to presenting differences according to the countries analyzed (DRUMMOND, 2020).

In dialogue with this field of study, this article is guided by the following question: what are some of the characteristics of Fourth-Wave Feminism in Brazil, according to studies on the subject and to the analysis of organizations that defend this position on digital social networks?

Guided by this question, the first objective of the present research was to carry out a literature review of Fourth-Wave Feminism. At this stage of the research, Brazilian authors who are references in studies on the waves of feminisms were reviewed (PINTO, 2003; MATOS, 2010; ALVAREZ, 2014; BUARQUE DE HOLLANDA, 2018; RIOS, PEREZ; RICOLDI, 2018; DRUMMOND, 2020).

Based on the review of this literature, the second objective of this study was to systematize some characteristics of contemporary feminist mobilizations, namely: 1) The use of digital media, specifically whether they are present only on social networks or if they carry out face-to-face activities; 2) The presence of intersectionality, in other words the defence of more than one agenda in an interconnected way; 3) The tendency to organize in the form of collectives, considered to be more horizontal organizations.

Given the increasing use of social networks by contemporary feminist movements (BUARQUE DE HOLLANDA, 2018; DRUMMOND, 2020), the empirical research presented here was also based on information collected in this virtual environment.

We carried out qualitative research that verified all the pages which characterize themselves as feminist on a major social network: Facebook. In June 2021, the investigation began by using the Facebook search field to identify the pages of any "company, organization or institution" that contained the word feminism or feminist in their descriptions. Each of these pages was checked by looking at their description. This stage of the research was intended to verify whether the

¹ To learn more about the Fourth-Wave of Feminism in the media (in Brazil, and comparing it to Portugal), consult the doctoral theses of Drummond (2020) and Sarmiento (2017). Such studies address contemporary feminisms, demonstrating the growing academic interest in the subject, including in the area of communication.

registered pages were actually feminist organizations. Faced with the profusion of pages that included the term feminist, we excluded the pages that did not defend feminism (because they were against it, or because they named a product or store as feminist).

Having made this initial selection, we proceeded with the analysis of 114 pages. In this second stage, we systematized the description of the organizations (on the “about” page of each organization, the part in which they describe themselves). Following that, we analyzed the last ten posts of each page. We chose to analyze the last ten posts because we realized that from approximately the seventh post onwards, the contents were repeated.

Using this technique, it was possible to collect data on the three categories chosen as the focus of the analysis, namely: the presence of feminist organizations in the digital environment, the defense of more than one agenda, and the way in which they are organizing themselves. More specifically, the use of social networks as a form of virtual-only mobilization was verified in the description and in the last posts of the organizations, in which face-to-face meetings were mentioned or not, as well as their location. The adoption of the idea of intersectionality was also verified through the descriptions of organizations and more recent posts, in which it was possible to perceive the defense of more than one agenda besides feminisms. Finally, to verify how feminisms are organizing themselves, we focused on the self-nomination of organizations as collectives, movements or groups.

The technique used in the research – analysis of organizations registered on a digital social network – has both limits and advantages. The most obvious limit is the fact that this method only allows access to the pages of political organizations that are registered on Facebook, thus excluding many other organizations in the field – incidentally, this is one of the reasons why in terms of approach we also problematize the novelty and excess of confidence in the digital universe. On the other hand, the adoption of this medium also provided some advantages, such as the ease of obtaining data and the possibility of identifying a wide range of contemporary organizations.

In addition to considering characteristics of Fourth-Wave feminist movements, we problematize the idea of novelty and rupture that may be present in the presentation of these movements. We also highlight benefits and drawbacks of adopting the concept of a fourth wave, which serves to organize reality, but should not limit its analysis, nor should it allow for the trajectories, continuities, contradictions and diversities of this social field to be ignored.

These distinctions are especially important when we consider that the periodization of waves in the US is sometimes taken as a reference for other regions. For this reason, the present study addresses the concept of waves, but contextualizes political mobilizations in Brazil based on their own characteristics.

The text is organized into two parts, in addition to the final considerations and this introduction. The first part seeks to provide a historical overview of the waves of the Brazilian feminist movement, separating and differentiating it from the historicization that takes place in other countries (especially in the literature that deals with the waves in the United States). In the second part, we focused on Brazilian feminist organizations registered on a digital social network.

1. The waves of the Brazilian feminist movement

Generally speaking, the first wave of feminism is associated with the achievement of suffrage. Between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, well-educated, upper-class women rose up to demand political rights in many countries. But legal suffrage was achieved over an extremely extended period of time. In the United States, women's suffrage was achieved in 1920; in the United Kingdom, through a process that dragged on from 1918 to 1928. In Brazil, in 1932; but taking Latin America as a whole into account extends the period of struggle from 1927 (Uruguay) to 1961 (Paraguay).

This data leads us to our first caveat regarding the periodization of feminist movements in the form of waves. Although the concept of waves may imply that there is a certain homogeneity among political processes, it is important to emphasize that the general characteristics of each wave vary according to different countries and regions. It is also necessary to highlight the fact that the fight for equality between men and women did not start in the first wave, but has accompanied the entire political trajectory of women.

The second wave is commonly associated with the political struggles of the 1960s, in the wake of the civil rights and counterculture movements. The theoretical influence goes back to the appropriation of Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* by feminist commentators such as Betty Friedan, Kate Millet and Germaine Greer (Magda Guadalupe SANTOS, 2016). This wave also saw the inauguration of Women's Studies and the writing of the first essays on gender, such as the classic by Gayle Rubin published in 1975.

The third wave is marked by the emergence of the concept of intersectionality, especially in the United States. The best-known author on the subject of intersectionality is the American Kimberlé Crenshaw (2002), who explains that while it is true that all women are in some ways

subject to the burden of gender discrimination, it is also true that other factors related to their social identities, such as race, skin color and ethnicity produce differences in the way each group of women experiences discrimination.

Another important feature of the third wave in the United States is the post-structuralist approach to sexuality and the broad incorporation of such studies into the field of gender studies (SANTOS, 2016; Maria Luiza HEILBORN, 2016).

On this point, however, there is an important caveat: despite the impression that the waves of US feminisms are identical to those of Brazil, in this work the concept of intersectionality that characterizes the Third Wave in the United States was considered as part of the fourth wave in Brazil.

Still focusing on the situation in Brazil, although a periodization based on authors who are references in each period could be made, it is more common to find a historicization based on social dynamics.

The first wave of feminism in Brazil, as in other countries, is associated with the struggle for women's suffrage (PINTO, 2003) which took place in the 1930s. It is at the beginning of the 20th century, however, that one can speak of a mobilization with a certain degree of organization and on a considerable collective scale, including the founding of a Women's Republican Party. In this period, the actions of Bertha Lutz and the Brazilian Federation for Women's Progress are especially noteworthy, as well as the publication of a considerable number of women's journals that, in addition to the vote, discussed other issues related to the female condition, such as equal education and the right to divorce. Alongside this feminism of more educated women of the elite, an anarchist feminism also emerged, in the vivacity of the movement brought largely by Italian immigrants (PINTO, 2003)

This first period of the feminist struggle is considered more conservative, as it allowed for less questioning of the sexual division of gender roles (Ana Alice Alcantara COSTA, 2005, p. 13). Feminism came from the elites, but addressed a growing female urban middle class that was educated and already had some jobs in the cities. In this sense, with the exception of anarchist and working-class feminism (PINTO, 2003), feminism at the time was formed by a more or less homogeneous group of educated women, linked to the elites, often civil servants and/or teachers (June HAHNER, 2003).

The second wave, which in countries like the United States and France gained strength within the context of political and cultural contestation, occurred in Brazil during the period of the military dictatorship that began in 1964, and especially from the mid-1970s onwards. A political opportunity was presented by the announcement of the International Women's Year in 1975, which facilitated public discussions at a time when as a rule any form of gathering was prohibited: women's issues were not seen as political or potentially subversive, which according to Alvarez (1990) gave the opportunity for their political presence to develop. As a result, in addition to being active in academic circles, movements formed by women (such as the demand for daycare centers) started to become stronger, and even in urban popular movements (against high housing prices) women were already making their presence felt. The Second Wave also included exiled feminists, political party activists, university students and academics (PINTO, 2003).

The third wave, in the case of Brazil, was driven by the growing importance of the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), favored in a broader international context, international funding and formal discussions in this field (such as the Human Rights Conferences of the 1990s, and within that context, the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995). In Brazil, Eco 1992 and the *Planeta Fêmea* (Female Planet) marked the beginning of the emergence of feminist Non-Governmental Organizations, whose main characteristics were the professionalization and technicalization of their actions, in tune with the international agendas of gender (when the term gained momentum in Brazil). This wave also saw the formation of NGOs that discussed issues like race and sexual diversity and that, by doing this important work, determined the characteristics of the next wave.

However, there are other interpretations that associate the third wave with the access of feminism to state institutions in a process that has sometimes been called the institutionalization of the movement (ALVAREZ, 2014). According to this interpretation, the period of the third wave was marked by the State's relationship with the movements – either via funding or through their participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies.

For some contemporary academics, feminist movements in Brazil would be part of a fourth wave. According to Matos (2010), the fourth wave of Brazilian and Latin American feminism is characterized by the institutionalization of the demands of women and feminism, the process of institutionalization of NGOs and feminist networks, and the possibility of trans or post-national movements. In addition to these traits, in a later work by the same author (MATOS, 2014) the following characteristics are attributed to the fourth wave: 1. The broadening of the concept of human rights; encompassing sex, gender, color, race, sexuality, age, generation, social class etc.; 2. The expansion and diversification of the basis of social and political mobilizations; 3. The focus on feminist sidestreaming, that is to say on the perspective that reinforces gender

discrimination, but goes beyond it; 4. The focus on feminist mainstreaming, through which new forms of relationships with the State and its many institutions gain visibility and prominence; 5. The new theoretical form – transversal and intersectional; 6. A recovery and convergence of thought, theory and feminist movements (MATOS, 2014).

In this study, some characteristics are included in the third wave that Matos (2010) claims belong to the fourth wave – such as the rapprochement between feminist movements and the State. On the other hand, we agree with the work of the author (MATOS, 2014) in her broadening of the concept of human rights, which leads her to include this trait as a factor that characterizes the fourth wave. It is important to emphasize that the studies by Matos (2010, 2014) were published a few years ago, and could not therefore define the characteristics that we highlight in the present study. But well before other authors, her work manages to perceive changes in contemporary feminisms that would be further studied in years to come – such as intersectionality for example.

Buarque de Hollanda (2018) also uses the term fourth wave to describe the expansion of contemporary feminisms driven by the use of the internet. However, unlike this author, we consider that the real milestone for the fourth wave were the protests of the so-called *Jornadas de Junho* (“Journeys of June”) of 2013, responsible for politically socializing young people who began to organize themselves into collectives (Olivia Cristina PEREZ, 2019).

In a 2014 paper Alvarez prefers to use the notion of a “third moment” to characterize the trajectories of feminisms in South America: the third moment of feminism found its most concrete expressions in the alter-globalization demonstrations and in the World Social Forum, and it would continue to be remodeled after the *Jornadas de Junho* of 2013. We especially agree with the author when we highlight the organization in the form of collectives driven by the *Jornadas de Junho*, but we include this characteristic as part of the fourth wave.

Other studies call “moments” what some academics call “waves”, and there are distinct ways of defining them. For example, Rayza Sarmento (2017) uses the term “third moment” to refer to the period from 1990 to 2016, which would combine the third and fourth waves. According to the author, during this period feminism advanced in the country and other forms of activism emerged, such as the transnational events World March of Women and *Marcha das Vadias* (March of the Sluts), as well as forms of action coordinated by new technologies.

In the literature itself, the periodization of feminist movements by waves has already been the target for critics and sceptics. According to Alvarez (2019), the idea of waves hides the heterogeneity of feminist expressions that in fact coexist. The author suggests that the interpretation of movements should seek to better evaluate and understand feminisms according to their evolution, instead of diagnosing the success or failure of movements. Responding to this criticism, we consider it important to point out that although the concept of waves helps to understand the cycles of feminist social movements, it is necessary to highlight their potential, meaning and limits.

Firstly, waves of political mobilization do not occur in homogeneous cycles: characteristics of earlier or later waves are present in all periods. The image of the waves conveys precisely the sense that the phenomena coexist, although they become more evident in certain periods. Secondly, a new wave does not represent a break with previous political mobilizations. Agendas from previous periods, such as the very participation of women in politics, continue to be the subject of debates and political mobilizations, just as the streets have not been replaced by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In this sense, a new wave does not mean that the field of social movements is assuming new and totally different characteristics in relation to previous cycles.

Another criticism of the periodization of feminist movements by waves is due to the fact that the reference point for waves is generally countries in the Northern Hemisphere, such as the United States, whereas here we defend the use of the concept in Brazil for the following reasons: it is already used in the literature of Brazilian feminist social movements, serving as a reference for the debate (PINTO, 2003; MATOS, 2010), and therefore it is not necessary to completely abandon it. Secondly, US periodization need not and should not always be taken as a reference for understanding other countries. In cases where the concept helps to understand the local reality, it is necessary to adapt the periodization and its characteristics. For example, in the present study we propose that the Brazilian fourth wave is characterized by intersectionality, whereas in the American periodization this was a trait of the third wave.

In addition to taking into account the differences in periodization, we defend a characterization of the waves that departs from the local feminist praxis. Periodization must be supported by an inductive research process, based on empirical research, not a deductive process guided by US references.

2. Characteristics of the new wave of feminist mobilizations

2.1 Digital social networks

Based on the literature that emphasizes the growing use of digital social networks by fourth wave feminisms (BUARQUE DE HOLLANDA, 2018; DRUMMOND, 2020), one of the points verified in

this research was the presence of feminist organizations that only use the virtual platform, without promoting face-to-face activities. To substantiate this point, we searched the pages of feminist organizations on Facebook for information about their activities and location. It was found that the majority of them (77 out of a total of 114 organizations registered on Facebook) did not promote face-to-face activities, but were dedicated to publicizing and debating feminist issues in the virtual environment. These data reveal the importance of the internet and social networks in the development of contemporary feminisms.

The most famous feminist discussion page on Facebook is "*Feminismo Sem Demagogia – Original*" ("Feminism Without Demagoguery – Original") with 1,079,919 followers, accessed on 06/20/2021.² According to the description on the page itself, "Feminism without Demagoguery is a space for the debate on feminism through a Marxist bias and the sexist/capitalist oppression of women". The page declares itself to be a forum for debate and shares content from other pages, as well as its own, generally denouncing cases of sexism and the political project represented by the President of the Republic at the time of the research, Jair Bolsonaro, elected in 2018. One post about parents having sex in front of their children was shared over 800 times on 06/20/2021.

In addition to serving to promote feminist debates, Facebook pages also include political organizations which use the virtual platform to debate and politically organize their followers. One such case is that of The Lélia Gonzalez Collective³ from the city of Campinas (SP), which defines itself as an intersectional black feminist group and debates these issues, as well as carrying out work such as collecting products for incarcerated women.

These two examples demonstrate some ways in which feminisms are present on the internet. The social network is a platform to promote debates on feminism and to act on behalf of women. In this process women are politically socialized, thus contributing to the diffusion of different feminisms.

In general, the field of studies on participation and the internet has verified the great potential of technological advances for expanding public participation in political movements (Jorge MACHADO, 2007, 2015). For example, Machado (2007) argues that the internet represents the main means of articulation and communication for civil society organizations, as it has implemented a fast, far-reaching form of communication, increased its degree of influence and made possible the development of more effective social mobilization strategies. In another study, the same author explains that: "the internet has not only enabled new, more effective, low-cost and far-reaching forms of communication, but has also constituted a new public forum for political debate" (MACHADO, 2015, p. 7).

The practical effects of the new relationship between the State and civil society brought about by the networks have already been evident for some years. Studies show that the internet boosted the mass protests that spread after 2010 in different parts of the world (Manuel CASTELLS, 2013). In Brazil, the internet was central to the largest protest by women known by the hashtag disseminated on social media *#EleNÃO* [*#NotHim*] (PEREZ, 2019b). These protests took place in mid to late September 2018, between the first and second rounds of the presidential elections, and their main objective was to defeat

Bolsonaro's candidacy for the presidency. Dozens of Brazilian cities saw demonstrations against Bolsonaro which brought more than 100,000 women to the streets. There were also demonstrations in different cities around the world, including New York, Lisbon, Paris and London (PEREZ, 2019b).

The call for these protests was made on the initiative of digital activists. The hashtag *#EleNÃO* was created by an advertising copywriter after conversations with her friends about what it would be possible to do in the face of the rising popularity of the then candidate Jair Bolsonaro. In an interview with the newspaper *El País* (Joana OLIVEIRA, 2018), publicist Ludimilla Teixeira stated that: "I noticed in my own networks many friends commenting and criticizing these [Bolsonaro's] positions, so we decided to unite all these women and create a political force to show that a large part of the population is not in favor of his candidacy". With the growing use of the hashtag *#EleNÃO* as a form of virtual protest, the activists created a Facebook group called "Mulheres Unidas Contra Bolsonaro" ("Women United Against Bolsonaro"). The group managed to bring together 3.8 million women (Renata CAFARDO, 2018). The organization of the protests against the candidacy of Jair Bolsonaro took place within this page, an example which demonstrates how social networks favor the creation of new mobilization repertoires. Another important point that should be mentioned is that the internet allows feminist movements to come into contact with ideas developed in other countries, enabling them to act transnationally.

The importance of the internet is also highlighted in studies that consider contemporary political mobilizations as part of the fourth wave of feminism. The association of the fourth wave with the expansion of internet use is so common that authors such as Ana Claudia Felgueiras (2017, p. 119) have used the term 'cyberfeminism' to describe the fourth wave of feminism, since it has been formed by "young militants who were raised in the digital era, understand the scope

² <https://www.facebook.com/FeminismoSemDemagogiaMarxistaOriginal/>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/feminterseccampinas/>

of this communication tool and know very well how to use it". Similarly, for Buarque de Hollanda (2018) the internet is related to the expansion of feminisms and consequently to their fourth wave.

Mobilization on the internet even influences mainstream journalism, as shown by Drummond (2020) in the analysis of journalistic coverage of the fourth wave of the feminist movement in major news outlets in Brazil and Portugal. According to the author, the recent large feminist demonstrations (in the streets and on the internet) led to an increase in news and reports about feminisms. Complementing this analysis, Carla Cerqueira and Rosa Cabecinhas (2015, p. 39) explain that journalistic discourse can be understood "as representations of 'reality', and with a central role in the formation of public opinion". The authors explain that often the information conveyed by the media is the way in which the general public has access to certain events, as in the case of discussions on gender and feminism. In this sense, journalistic coverage of feminisms should be a central point in the discussion of what one thinks about them, and how one thinks about them – thus the issue constitutes a specific and important field of reflection, yielding studies such as those of Cerqueira and Cabecinhas (2015), Drummond (2020) and Sarmento (2017).

However, the realization that the internet has transformed feminism cannot disregard the limitations of the digital network, the most obvious of which is the fact that many Brazilians do not have access to the internet. According to a 2021 survey on the use of Information and Communication Technologies in Brazilian households (Cetic.br, 2022), the percentage of households able to access the World Wide Web rose from 71% to 82% in the two-year period. Despite this, the country still has 35.5 million people without access to the internet.

In addition, internet use is uneven across social classes and regions. 100% of households in class A had internet access in 2021, compared to only 61% of those in classes D/E (Cetic.br, 2022). According to the same survey (Cetic.br, 2022), in the Southeast (84%), in the South (83%) and in the Midwest (83%), the number of households with internet access exceeded 80%, while this percentage was 79% in the North and 77% in the Northeast. These data are important for understanding the public that accesses and disseminates feminism on the internet, as well as for emphasizing that the feminist struggle is also carried on outside the digital world.

Ultimately, the development of electronic media does not in itself amount to emancipatory social participation. "The content, diversity and impact of political discussion need to be carefully analyzed before claiming that online discourse strengthens democracy" (Zizi PAPACHARISSI, 2002, p. 18). A recent study (Marisa VON BÜLOW, 2018) shows that power asymmetries within a social movement may not only be reproduced, but also reinforced through the use of social media.

Finally, we emphasize that although the use of digital social networks is an important strategy of Fourth-Wave feminisms, this does not mean abandoning other strategies. Proof of this is that the *#EleNão* protests were convened over the internet, but still used the streets as the form of demonstration (PEREZ, 2019b).

2.2 Intersectional feminism

To find out more about the guidelines of contemporary feminist organizations, we analyzed the last ten posts from the 114 pages registered on Facebook. We found 56 political organizations and Facebook discussion pages that emphasize the importance of defending more than one ideal: in general, feminism linked to anti-racism and sometimes to the fight against discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite and transgender people.

The Salto Collective⁴ – Anhembi Morumbi, for example, formed by women from a private university, defines itself as "a leftist intersectional collective of autonomous feminist students at Universidade Anhembi Morumbi". In the same way, the Cariri Women Philosophers' Collective⁵ fights "all forms of oppression that affect, in an intersectional way, women".

At the same time, the importance of paying attention to the various intersecting inequalities is present in the idea of intersectionality. The idea and importance of intersectionality as a way of conceiving social injustices was developed by social movements, especially by black feminisms. The very struggle of these movements contributed to researchers/activists entering the academic realm, helping to develop and disseminate the concept as an analytical lens for understanding social inequalities, especially those related to the experience of black women.

As a result of the relationship between activism and universities, intersectionality is now also an academic concept, present mainly in studies on gender and feminisms. The most important black feminist author for the dissemination of the term intersectionality is Crenshaw (2002). She argues that inequalities related to class, gender or race simply cannot be hierarchized; it is the interaction of these categories that contributes to the creation and perpetuation of inequalities. In academia, intersectionality is an analytical tool to understand how inequalities are articulated. This category is especially included in writings on gender and feminism, and has been widely disseminated in Brazil from the 2000s onwards (Adriana PISCITELLI, 2008).

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/salto.anhembimorumbi/info>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/mulheresfilosofascariri/>

Crenshaw's writings have been well known in the United States since the mid-1990s. In Brazil, some of the author's works were only translated in the 2000s. In general, there is a close connection between the debate in Brazil and the theoretical references to the United States. One of the most famous black feminists today, Djamila Ribeiro, disseminates the intersectionality of the North American matrix on social networks, in academic courses and on television programs. She is an example of a feminist with a great online presence who then appeared on television (*Programa Amor & Sexo* on the Globo network, and *Saia Justa* on the channel GNT), thus contributing to a broader understanding of the divisions related to social oppression.

But it is important to emphasize that the debate about intersectionality is not only among black feminists from North America. In Brazil in the mid-1980s, professor and activist Lélia Gonzalez was already discussing how different social cleavages (such as gender and race) are interwoven.

Moreover, as we have already pointed out, intersectionality is not just an academic debate, but was developed and is present in the guidelines of social movements, such as the various feminisms. As Buarque de Hollanda (2018) explains, while in the 1980s the hegemonic discourse of feminism in Brazil was restricted to the defense of women and autonomy, the fourth wave movements reject a universal feminine condition, specifically defending its plurality, combining issues such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and religion.

An example of what intersectionality represents for collectives is expressed on the page of the *Coletivo Bendita Geni – UEMG*, from Frutal.⁶

The Feminist Collective – UEMG/Frutal adopts the intersectional approach, which includes the social aspects of class, color and gender, as well as demonstrating the privileges of certain sectors of society that overlap with other less privileged groups. It is extremely important to link the movement with the social issue of color, gender and class. In view of the current context, in which it is intended to maintain the superiority of the culture of white, cisgender men with higher incomes, it is necessary to provoke an insurgency of the need to review such concepts.

By reviewing the pages of the 114 feminist organizations registered on Facebook, it is clear that feminist movements have been adopting the perspective of intersectionality to account for the importance of various social inequalities linked to gender. Feminist political organizations that emphasize intersectionality, for example, understand that groups with more difficulty in accessing rights and more subject to social oppression, such as women, black people and the LGBT community, are not discriminated against simply because of a social divide. In addition to the difficulties related to the women's personal experience, they are weighed down by social oppression stemming from the fact that they are black, lesbian and poor. In this sense, the idea of intersectionality broadens our understanding of the social factors and divisions involved in the various social inequalities.

For such organizations and their discussion pages, the intersectional approach serves as a parameter of justice, insofar as they demand that the intersection of inequalities be considered for the guarantee of rights. The intersections between the feminist, black and LGBT movements are often present in the works that mention the fourth wave. An example would be the following excerpt from a study by Rebbeca Corrêa Silva and Joana Maria Pedro (2016, p. 194): "unlike the waves that preceded it, the boldest proposal of a fourth wave of feminism [...] is characterized by the incorporation of the various feminisms of horizontal lines of thought, such as black, lesbian and male and LGBT".

Matos (2014) also emphasizes that a characteristic of the fourth wave is the broadening of the concept of human rights to encompass sex, gender, color, race, sexuality, age, generation and social class. Similarly, according to Rios, Perez and Ricoldi (2018), we are seeing a new generation of feminists who articulate inequalities related especially to gender and race, and thereby problematize the multiple forms of social oppression.

The adoption of intersectional agendas is also related to the internet, insofar as studies on intersectionality, as well as reflections on the importance of combating racism and homophobia (now also extended to lesbophobia and LGBTphobia), are published in the digital medium. Buarque de Hollanda (2018) attributes to the internet the possibility of expanding feminist movements.

2.3 Feminist collectives

Some of the political organizations found on the pages of Facebook (12 out of a total of 37) defined themselves as collectives, while most of the others carried only the name of the organization. Therefore, most organizations that used a name to define the way they organized themselves called themselves collectives.

Although it is not possible to give a definition encompassing all types of political organizations that characterize themselves as collectives, they have in common discourse which highlights practices and nomenclatures that show how distinct they are from parliamentary institutions, from the political articulation of parties and from other formal organizations, which are considered hierarchical (PEREZ, 2019). The studies on collectives highlight some of their characteristics, such

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/ColetivoBenditaGeni.UEMGFrutal/>

as multiple agendas, horizontality, fluidity and online presence (Greta Leite MAIA, 2013; Maria da Glória GOHN, 2017).

The collectives do not have a single agenda, nor a long-term commitment, and have often been easily formed, simply by bringing together those interested in an issue. This is the case, for example, of the university feminist collective which describes itself in the following terms:⁷ “the IESP Feminist Collective is a collective of post-graduate women whose objective is to provoke feminist reflections and practices”. This informality favors the formation of smaller groups.

They are generally made up of university students who get together with other colleagues to discuss and organize actions to defend the rights of women and other groups which are more vulnerable to social oppression. That is why it is important to highlight the generational characteristics of the fourth wave of feminism.

The generational character of today’s feminisms has been observed in studies such as those by Flávia Rios and Regimeire Maciel (2018), who discuss distinctions in contemporary political activism, especially as they involve race and gender as contentious political categories. This does not mean that older organizations have left the scene, because: “... the organizational bases, institutionalization and centralized networks also simultaneously mark the contemporaneity and historicity of the mobilization of black women in the country” (RIOS; MACIEL, 2018, p. 4). In other words, traditional organizations such as political parties are still present and fundamental for the development of fourth-wave feminisms. This is also the case for feminist discussions that predominated in previous waves and that continue to exist – such as the need for basic (civil, political and social) rights for women.

Young people identify with collectives because they are different from the forms of political organization they repudiate: partisan, centralized, hierarchical and bureaucratic (GOHN, 2017). Collectives claim a certain autonomy precisely to express how different they are from state organizations. According to Alvarez (2014), this organization in a horizontal and more autonomous way is characteristic of a ‘third moment’ of contemporary feminisms. A typical example of a university collective in which such characteristics are evident is described on Facebook as follows.

The Feminist collective emerged in 2012 through the initiative of students at the Federal University, who understood that there was a lack of platforms to debate the situation of women at the university, and the many sexist situations to which we are exposed daily, and so started a conversation/debate group to discuss the condition of women in the university (and all the issues that encompasses) from a feminist perspective. We organize ourselves in a horizontal and self-managed way, that is, without hierarchies or job titles, just a division of tasks. Being autonomous, the Collective has no links with other party organizations, which does not prevent people organized in other spheres from helping to develop it, and therefore to promote an open dialogue with any ideology. We understand that the feminist struggle is intersectional and necessary to denaturalize, combat and overcome existing sexist relationships in society. For this reason, we also discuss the intersecting issues of class and race.

This excerpt highlights the idea of horizontality and inclusion present in organizations which are collectives. Even if such organizations do not manage to be as horizontal or inclusive as they intend, there is a sometimes practical and at least discursive attempt to actually include women in their decisions. These traits distinguish the collectives from the organizations they repudiate.

Although they are nothing new, collectives have been growing, especially after the large-scale protests that expressed discontent with traditional political institutions, such as those known in Brazil as the *Jornadas de Junho de 2013* (PEREZ, 2021).

The 2013 *Jornadas de Junho* are the milestone used in this study to mark the beginning of the fourth wave. We do not think of it as a single protest, but rather as a cycle that has as its watershed moment the protests started by the *Movimento Passe Livre* (“The Free Fare Movement”) in June 2013 in the city of São Paulo, although they were not restricted to that region or date.

Despite having different agendas, the protests in that cycle expressed dissatisfaction with the way politics was implemented in parliamentary arenas, especially through political parties. The latter were the target of criticism due to their inefficiency and excess of hierarchies and bureaucracies (PEREZ, 2019a). As a counterpoint, young people clamored for political participation that was more inclusive and connected with their aspirations. The organization in the form of collectives would make this direct action possible, hence the growth of this type of organization after the protests – most of the collectives created after this cycle, in fact, carried the flag of feminism (PEREZ, 2019a).

Similar interpretations have been adopted by the authors for the debate on the fourth wave. Buarque de Hollanda (2018) cites 2013 as a milestone for the fourth wave, although he believes that it was only in 2015, with the reaction against the bill by deputy Eduardo Cunha to make legal abortion more difficult in cases of rape, that there was in fact a significant growth in feminist movements. Alvarez (2014), while not sharing the definition of the fourth wave, places in a ‘third moment’ the feminisms that have been remodeling themselves after the 2013 *Jornadas de Junho*.

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/coletivofeministadoiesp/>

Conclusion

The first objective of this research was to verify the main characteristics of the so-called fourth wave of feminism according to Brazilian academic studies that have addressed the subject. In the study, we show that the fourth wave is related to the expansion of the use of the internet, and has even been called cyberfeminism. The fourth wave has also been the result of previous social movements responsible for highlighting and disseminating the importance of intersectional analysis. Another characteristic of the fourth wave is the return to the streets for large protests and a certain emphasis on autonomy.

To investigate these characteristics further, we analyzed all 114 Facebook pages of organizations that characterize themselves as feminist. As a result of this investigation, we found that: 1) 77 of the 114 pages dedicated to feminist ideals on Facebook (ie: most of them) were for digital dissemination of the issue without face-to-face activities – which is evidence of the intense use of social networks to promote feminisms; 2) According to the analysis of the last ten posts of the 114 pages registered on Facebook, 56 organizations highlighted the importance of defending more than one ideal, generally feminism linked to anti-racism – which signals the importance of the debate on intersectionality; 3) Some of the political organizations with Facebook pages (12 out of a total of 37) defined themselves as collectives – demonstrating the importance of a more horizontal organization among feminisms.

These characteristics coexist with others already developed by feminist movements, but they have become more evident – which is why we understand them as parts of a fourth wave. The use of waves highlights the predominant characteristics in certain periods, in close relationship with the political, social and economic context.

However, we problematize this form of conceptualization in the study, emphasizing the fact that the fourth wave is not homogeneous or revolutionary. Traditional mobilizations coexist with those created recently, and their agendas and strategies intersect.

In this sense, this study contributes to the literature in this field by problematizing some meanings given to the concept of waves in its analysis of the fourth wave of feminism. We believe that the fact that some studies include only external references to our region, as well as conveying the idea of homogeneity and novelty, should not be a reason to abandon this form of periodization.

For the focus of future studies, we point out the growth of political organizations and the dissemination of ideas contrary to the discussion on gender and feminisms. Throughout our research, we also found at least a dozen Facebook pages that were against feminist ideas and that belittle precisely this attempt to create a plural and inclusive feminism. At the same time that progressive feminist discussions are growing, conservative and reactionary movements are also growing. This is a topic that still deserves to be investigated and discussed, including in connection with the concept of the fourth wave, because it shows the heterogeneity and disputes surrounding the issue.

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