

Research In Practice: Dissertation Proposal,
Feminism, Equality and Generation.

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In this essay I will be discussing three key words with the backing of at least three images, a combination of visual artist and writers. With this research I will try and seek more understanding of these three words feminism, equality and generation to produce a question for my final thesis that explores theory that grasps my interest but also accumulates knowledge. I will be referencing theorists such as Maura Reilly, John Berger, Dorling Kindersley and artists such as Judy Chicago.

Feminism is an activist cause most people will have heard about, I have written plenty of essays surrounding this cause also. Within this research I want to compare my experience and thoughts of the cause with published knowledge against the opinions and thoughts of women in my life who have had an impact on me and my personal philosophies.

‘a movement that aimed to achieve legal, economic, and social equality between the sexes, and to end sexism and the oppression of women by men.’ (kindersly,2019, p.11).

When asking the importing women in my life about what they thought feminism was that is pretty much the reply I got and I understood that was the definition of feminism, but I feel like we all know that by now, I want to know about how that definition has been shown visually within the art world, how artist have convinced people who thought the opposite to them to join the opposing side. I want to understand how lucky I am to have been brought up in this generation and not my mother and fathers who were brought up in the 50’s and 70’s I’ve always been told I can do anything I want, others weren’t as lucky and by the end of this research I’d like to understand how far we have come.

‘women were viewed as inferior to men in terms of their intellectual, social, and cultural status.’

(kindersly,2019, p 11)

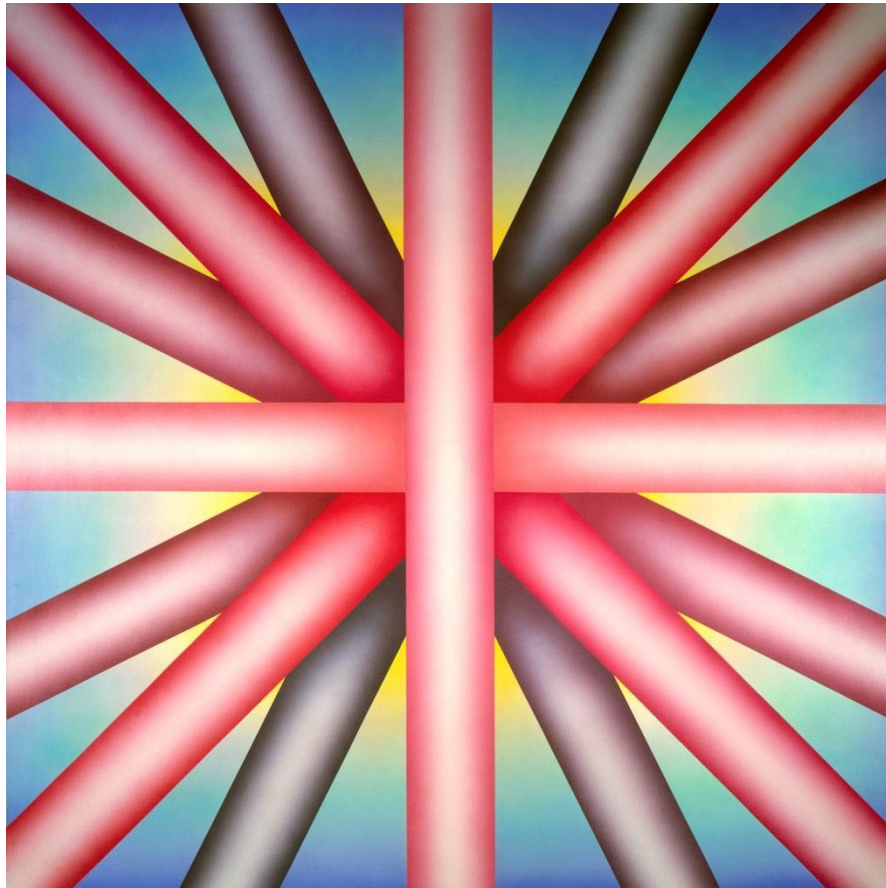


Fig 1:

Judy Chicago, heaven is for white men only, 1973, sprayed acrylic on canvas 80 x 80.

Looking at Chicago's work is enlightening in ways that the feminism movement is represented within her work. This piece being from the 70's where our rights as women were very much limited compared to men as a whole it is interesting to see how she has represented what our rights were at the time using the strips of different shades of red to block out and very much cover the background. The background being yellow – (heaven) and the strips remind me of the

bars on a prison cell really does show how men felt we weren't worthy of equality. This particular piece is one of many pieces that helped Chicago discover the eradication of women's achievements, something that would inflame her major work, *The dinner party*. This representation of the movement makes me want to explore how far we have come as feminists and how much we have had to fight to get to where we are as women today.



Fig 2

Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party, 1974-1979 mixed media 48 x 48 ft.

This work from Chicago is just inspiring and educational, it's undeniable evidence of the impact women have had on this world and with our rights. This work was exhibited in 16 venues in 6 different countries on 3 continents to have a viewing audience of over one million people. This artwork has been the example set for feminist and for the way we show feminism in the art

world. Chicago in the ceremonial table showcases 39 powerful and prominent historical female figures, the '*heritage panels*' which exemplify the additions of the 999 women on the '*heritage floor*' and the '*Acknowledgement panels*' that distinguish Chicago's assistants and collaborators. Collectively these factors celebrate the many aspects of women's history and contributions. My work at the moment is very personal and does not engage in the theory of feminism as Chicago's work has and continues to do so but I would like to start engaging with my subjects and their stories of how they've become the person they are today. My parents have been substantial in my work lately and it is an ongoing subject matter so the research i've looked at so far has encouraged me to ask my mother how much her partner my (father) has supported her over the years and how my mother has changed his older generation stereotype of women belong in the kitchen as she is the main provider for their household now and not my father.

Equality being a keyword in the movement feminism. I'm not completely oblivious to the meaning of the word but I would like to understand it on a broader spectrum to be able to interact with subjects of my work easier and with more understanding of their struggles as individuals. Researching into equality I came across two more keywords I believe to be substantial in my research and will help me to accumulate a question, those words are prejudice and discrimination.

'Prejudice manifests in attitudes about an individual, but it is based on our ideas about the group to which that individual belongs' (Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo.2017)

What we believe to be right and fair we are taught most of within the community and household we are brought up in. Where I grew up I was always told I could be anything but on the other hand I was also taught that my father was the main provider for the household at that

time and the man with the power to say no, me and my siblings never really listened when it came to my mother, she rarely raised her voice but when my father raised his voice none of us dare answer back. That definitely carried through to my adult life. I now find myself being anxious speaking to male figures in power and less enticed to listen to female figures in power even being a woman myself. I rarely recognize the gender inequality I grew up around from men who respect me as a woman and love me for that fact but just looking at the things my brothers were expected to do and understand were completely different but I do feel more protected for that fact. Was it fair for my brothers to not have the same protection ?

‘While women can be just as prejudiced as men, women cannot be “just as sexist as men” because they do not hold political, economic, and institutional power.’ (Özlem Sensoy and Robin

DiAngelo.2017)



Fig 3

(The box men of shinjuku station) 12. Michael Wolf

Here we see inequality at its finest, the worst off in any society and all societies the poor.

‘Poverty is a social status . . . It has grown . . . as an invidious distinction between classes . . .’

(Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo.2017)

Being classed as poor at many points in my life I have personally experienced the inequality in opportunities presented to the poor, growing up wearing my brothers hand me down isolated me from other girls my age wearing the new nelly kelly shoes and having all the new equipment we needed for school, having an actual physical education kit and that being a requirement to the extent of you were not aloud to join the lesson without said kit. Having experienced missing out on educational experiences simply because my parents were struggling working class barely scraping by. Wolf’s photographs have inspired me to consider using my personal experiences to my advantage in my image making and storytelling technique, they have also opened my eyes to opinions of people who could have been my family if we were less lucky than we have been.

“The kids have no sense of tradition or respect. They have no work ethic.”(Linda Gravett, Robin Throckmorton. 2017)

The divide that is the generation gap. I wanted to research this topic because there is such a concerning gap between what the older generation believe to be right and what the so called ‘snowflake’ generation believe. Being a millennium I obviously have an opinion on the matter, My father was born in the 50’s where Racism was not considered to be the crime it is today he’s very open with his experiences and what he once considered to be okay to say to another human

being and I remember being shocked at first and then I began to understand that the rights and level of equality still has so much growing to do, but we are much further on understanding what equal rights for all mean. With the older generation still bringing up children and their grandchildren there are still high levels of racism, homophobia, sexism and gender stereotypes being spread like a bad disease in all cultures and classes and I genuinely am starting to believe that it is down to what we are teaching our children.

‘The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.’ (John Berger.1990)

This quote backs my opinion that we are taught what we believe to an extent. The older generation aren't to blame for our actions and what we choose on a day to day basis but I do blame them for the inequality and hatred my generation grew up with. To call the youngest generation a ‘snowflake’ generation or soft, uneducated and just lazy is wrong. Nobody should have to live with the stress, inequality, racism and homophobia they do in this day and age. we are all human, the same species we are all the same, we should have the same rights wether you have money or not, black or not , gay or not, gender fluid or not, the worlds vocablury is growing understanding of other peopl is growning its not something anybody should be afraid of we are beginning to put the world the way it should have always been slowly but shortly.

‘Miscommunication and conflict across generations affects productivity, morale’(Linda Gravett, Robin Throckmorton. 2017)

If we as generations stopped being so hateful toward one another I honestly believe that we could strive for equality, In being tolerant with one another actually making a good impact on this world, but I don't know if we could put our differences aside because we are so different. the

beliefs our parents were brought up with are just so different to what a lot of young adults believe today, could we put them aside ?

‘But if you can’t get everyone to work together, the employees, the organization, and the customers all suffer from this generational divide.’ (Linda Gravett, Robin Throckmorton. 2017)

‘All will suffer’(Linda Gravett, Robin Throckmorton. 2017) we will all suffer if we can not come to an agreement that strives need to be made in just our general human rights let alone anything else, as one people we would be strong just use the example of the feminism movement the strides that have be made in gender equality issues have been huge and all because a group of people agreed that those issues needed to be addressed and fought alongside each other for them to be addressed. we could make a semi decent world together.



Fig 4

untitled 2 'Generations' Frauke Thielking.

Looking at Thielking's work it inspired me to consider the generation gap of my subjects what's obviously one generation compared to the other. Also playing on looks I want to carry on with the subject matter of my family through my work, perhaps I could start considering my friend/colleagues relationship with their parents too how similar they are to their parents or how different they may be to them. Also playing on looks and how we may look a certain way but that doesn't guarantee our personalities.

Overall this research has been an eye opener to what I need to consider in my practical and theory work, what I need more understanding on and how I could possibly show the theory I am interested in through creative and inventive ways with image making. After looking at all keywords, researching artists and theorists to do with those keywords, all this information has led to numerous questions as well as a few more keywords. I feel like the subject matter kept going back to the matter of equality. I have always had interest in this theme although there is no factual question I could ask around this theme, so I have elected to ask a question based on theory where I will research a philosopher's thoughts on the matter.

The relationship between the levels of equality in different generations is something that has really peaked my interest in the issue of inequality, The reasoning behind my question links back to a quote I came across in a guide to help older management connect with their younger staff. 'Miscommunication and conflict across generations affects productivity, morale'(Linda Gravett, Robin Throckmorton. 2017) . Although this quote isn't a groundbreaking philosophers opinion I believe it to be one of the many reasons we suffer as people today the miscommunication between the generations.

Is it the generational divide that separates us in what we believe to be equality and inequality?
could we together eliminate inequality in all aspects of life? Is it down to the artist ? Can we as
artists bridge that divide?

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Fig 1: Judy Chicago, *Heaven is for White Men Only*, 1973, sprayed acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80 in., collection of the New Orleans Museum of Art. © Judy Chicago/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Fig 2: Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1974 - 1979, mixed media, 48 x 48 ft., Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Collection of the Brooklyn Museum. © Judy Chicago/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York Photo © Donald Woodman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Fig 3: Michael Wolf *Untitled 12 (The box men of shinjuku station)*

Fig: Frauke Thielking, *untitled 3, Generations*. fraukeye.frauke-thielking.de

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