While ineffective tactics have beleaguered the Nonhuman Animal rights movement, the reign of sexism and pornographic exploitation is equally disastrous to liberation efforts. The Nonhuman Animal rights movement comprises primarily of women (Gaarder, 2011, p.11), and yet it continues to operate according to patriarchal norms. Just as industry-friendly welfare reform deflects movement resources from recruiting potentially thousands (if not millions) of new vegans, patriarchy-friendly tactics that bank on degrading women reduce the potential of the movement’s female majority. If the millions who consider themselves “animal lovers” were to step back from the irrationality of welfare reform and single-issue campaigning and commit to political veganism, real change would be at advocates’ fingertips. If the millions of women were to escape the irrationality of patriarchy and become full citizens both in society and social movements, it is likely that systems of oppression would crumble. In other words, the movement’s greatest source of people power is currently immobilized, as female activists are so often stripped or silenced. The movement must liberate its women before it can liberate other animals.

Two major issues complicate the full utilization of the large female demographic in Nonhuman Animal rights advocacy spaces: the degeneration of feminist mobilization and the exclusion of feminism from the discourse of rationality and science. Both can be sourced to the patriarchal assault on feminism. Science – an institution with a sordid history of oppressing women – continues to chip away at feminist gains by either ignoring women-specific issues or delegitimizing them. On the other hand, the feminist movement itself seems to have lost its radical agenda, leaving itself ripe for patriarchal infiltration (Dines, 2012; Levy, 2005). The rise of third-wave feminism, the illusion of post-feminism,
and the popularity of “choice” feminism derail feminist goals that are still very much relevant, even in today’s supposedly more “egalitarian” society. This chapter will demonstrate how these ideological derailments manifest in Nonhuman Animal rights spaces as well.

**Individualism, feminism, and Nonhuman Animal rights advocacy**

The general attitude of indifference to feminist concerns in the Nonhuman Animal rights community likely reflects normalized attitudes of sexism in larger society, women’s internalization of normalized sexism, and perhaps even a simple hesitancy for the movement to admit weakness. Indeed, the notion that sexism could exist in a movement that is comprised largely of female-identified advocates seems almost inconceivable as a matter of common sense. If sexism is not thought a problem and if feminist critique is considered irrelevant in a society that is still very much oppressive toward women, then these conditions are indicative of post-feminism ideology. Post-feminism is a concept that presumes that the core problems of sexism have been addressed (or are being addressed) and that feminism no longer holds any direct relevancy. Those adhering to post-feminist ideology may react to feminist critique with skepticism or incredulity.

In association with this post-feminist view, there is also the complicating presence of choice feminism, which, in some ways, represents a neoliberal and patriarchal co-optation. Anita Sarkeesian addresses the resulting consequences in a 2015 feminist panel, *All About Women:*

Choice feminism posits that each individual woman determines what is empowering for herself, which might sound good on the surface, but this concept risks obscuring the bigger picture and larger fundamental goals of the movement by focusing on individual women with a very narrow individual notion of empowerment. It erases the reality that some choices that women make have an enormous negative impact on other women’s lives. So, it’s not enough to feel *personally* empowered or be *personally* successful within the oppressive framework of the current system. Even if an individual woman can make patriarchy work for her, it’s still a losing game for the rest of the women on the planet. The fact of the matter is that some choices have ramifications beyond ourselves and reinforce harmful patriarchal ideas about women as a group and about women’s bodies in our wider shared culture. And because of how systems of oppression