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Feminist Consciousness and Social Capital: Bonds, Breaks, and Bridges

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FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL:

BONDS, BREAKS, AND BRIDGES

Beverly A. Beyer

140 Pages   December 2003

Semi-structured qualitative interviews with current and former midwestern NOW members reveal the complex reciprocal connections between growing feminist consciousness and individuals' social capital—the bonds, the breaks, and the bridges.

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Through in-depth qualitative interviews with five current or former members of a midwestern National Organization for Women (NOW) chapter, I explore four related research questions regarding: growth of feminist consciousness; how feminist ideology affects the evolution of social networks, and vice versa; the impact of intersecting social hierarchies; and feminism as a force for bonding and bridging social capital in the local community context. Analytical tools include feminist methodology, the articulation model, an understanding of intersecting social hierarchies, and grounded theory.

Participants each explained their gradual identification with feminism differently as a result of specific life experiences, although common elements, like religious upbringing and family dynamics, emerged. Growing feminist consciousness both supported creation of and caused breaks in social networks. Likewise, prior social networks had a mixed impact on development of feminist consciousness. All five women display strong social consciences, attend to community relationships, and value networks, both formal and informal. At the same time, each woman's different social position regarding race, class, sexuality, and religion shaped her views about feminism and relationships.

These women *do* think of their social networks as social capital, as a resource for solving collective and individual problems and as a way to bond with other feminists and to build bridges to activists in other social justice organizations. In fact, these interviews highlight the potentially recursive relationship between feminist consciousness and social capital. At the same time, they reveal the limitations implicit in the economic model of social capital.

As perhaps the only qualitative, individual-level examination of social capital in women-dominated activities, this study enriches our theoretical understanding of the concept while elucidating the community contributions of feminists in a mid-sized midwestern city. These feminists' openness to bridging gaps in their social networks and their recognition of connection offers great promise for building social capital.

FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL:

BONDS, BREAKS, AND BRIDGES

BEVERLY A. BEYER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
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for the Degree of

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women" (Friedan 1963:11). So begins Betty Friedan's (1963) famous text, one of the catalysts of the second wave of feminism in the United States. Forty years later, now that the "problem" has been unearthed and much discussed, what is the impact of feminism on the social fabric of the United States? While the effects of feminism today may be felt in many diverse realms of social life, the women's movement has likely altered its members' relationships and the social capital at their disposal. Social capital is the norms and network of synergetic relationships that promotes solutions to collective and individual problems.

Research Questions

Through qualitative interviews with current and former members of a midwestern National Organization for Women (NOW) chapter, I seek to understand the impact of feminist consciousness on individuals' social capital.[1] I will explore the following research questions:

1. How do these midwestern feminists describe their involvement with the feminist movement and the growth of their feminist consciousness?

2. How has their feminist ideology affected the evolution of their social networks, both informal and formal, and how have these networks affected their feminist ideology?

3. How might these feminists' locations in intersecting social hierarchies shape these descriptions?

4. In the local community context, how might feminism be a force for bonding and bridging social capital?

Clearly, these questions are related, and their answers may overlap. While feminism and social capital both operate on other levels that may be examined together in future research projects, the unit of analysis here is the individual.

The potential link between feminist consciousness and social capital may support the notion that feminist organizations continue to be a force for social transformation. In terms of social capital, the individual level is a relatively unexplored area to which this study may contribute theoretical understanding. To the extent that feminist consciousness forms bonds and builds bridges, rather than creating breaks, changes in policy that promote the equality of women and men could potentially have the additional benefit of increasing social capital. Also, from a political standpoint, emphasizing the *positive* aspects of feminism may increase the pace of social change regarding women's issues.

In his concise intellectual history of the term, Michael Woolcock (1998) defines social capital as "the information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks" (p. 153). In *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert D. Putnam (2000) notes that social capital can result in "mutual support, cooperation, trust, [and] institutional effectiveness" (p. 2). He then argues that

social capital in the United States has experienced a significant decline.[2] Why would

such a lessening of social capital be important? Edward Blakely (1999) contends that

"community is now a commodity," while Benjamin Barber (1998a) describes the ongoing

transformation of collective citizens into individual consumers. In other words, in the

context of increasingly rapid globalization and the fragmenting forces of postmodern

society, weakening social ties may lead to the disappearance of democracy altogether

(Barber 1998a). Putnam (2000:284) argues that community connections in our country

are indeed disintegrating, largely as a result of television, generational shifts, work, and

suburban sprawl.[3] While he examines these and other structural factors, ideological or

political issues are largely excluded from his analysis.

Putnam (2000:403) praises Friedan for empowering women to verbalize what

feels wrong in their lives. But what does feminist consciousness *do* for social capital?

How might a common feminist ideology support and expand social networks for its

adherents? How might feminist thinking cause fissures between individual women

and/or between women and men? Confronted with an apparent national decline in social

capital, it is essential to understand those locations in our complex, stratified society that

counter the trend.

Theoretical Framework

Feminism

"Feminism" is the belief in equality between women and men, although there are

many variations. Today, as Rosemarie Tong (1989) notes, we should properly speak of

"feminisms" rather than "feminism," since its theoretical orientations range from radical to liberal and include many variants in between. For example, Nancy M. Henley et al. (1998) differentiate among conservatism (anti-feminism), liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, cultural feminism, and womanism. Henley et al. (1998:321) also list newer and (according to them) less widely accepted variants of feminism, such as anarcho-feminism, ecofeminism, global feminism, essentialism, and lesbian feminism. Examining 1992 National Election Studies data, Nancy Felipe Russo (1998:315) concludes that the term "feminist" means quite different things for different people. Perhaps "a political Achilles' heel," the variety of feminist attitudes "keeps us on our intellectual toes, challenges us to question our assumptions, and helps us build a broader base of support for women's issues" (Russo 1998:313).

Patricia Hill Collins (1998), for instance, questions assumptions of feminism. She points out that Black feminism is well received by White women (Collins 1998: 69). But she notes that "despite considerable ideological heterogeneity that operates within the term *feminism*, unfortunately racial segregation in the United States and the hegemonic ideologies that accompany it typically obscure this plurality" (Collins 1998:66). In this sense, feminism in the United States can be exclusive; its goals appear to be in the interests of White women only (Collins 1998:66-67). The word "feminism" has also been identified with modern Western colonization (Collins 1998:67). Just as problematic, academic feminists may espouse postmodernist valuation of individual subjectivity, which weakens the power of any racial identification as a collective tool for social change (Collins 1998:68). Black feminism confronts the supposed universality of

White feminists' views while challenging Black women to come to terms with sexism in their lives (Collins 1998:67). But Black feminists must resist having their critique subsumed and obscured by White feminism (Collins 1998:68).

This project attempts to retain a similarly nuanced understanding of the term "feminism." The focus here is feminist *consciousness*, because the unit of analysis is the individual, rather than this midwestern NOW chapter or feminism as a movement. Feminist consciousness may precede, coincide with, and/or follow membership in an organization like NOW. Carefully examining subjective, individual experiences can elucidate how commitment to feminist ideals affects connections to other individuals and to groups (Barbara S. Heyl, personal communication, June 12, 2002).

Social Capital

Not surprisingly, the term "social capital" may be interpreted in a variety of ways, each reflecting current scholarly trends and the interests of the user (Wall, Ferrazzi, and Schryer 1998). Anirudh Krishna (2001:930) adds that social capital's forms may vary by culture. Norman Uphoff and C. M. Wijayaratna (2000) define social capital as "mutually beneficial collective action, [which is] the most specific phenomenon (category of outcomes) that brings together the main concepts currently given credence in the literature" (p. 1886). This study, by contrast, will focus on the social relationships that might lead to such collective action. For that reason, social capital is here defined as the norms and "web of cooperative relationships between citizens that facilitates resolution of collection [*sic*] action problems" (Brehm and Rahn 1997:999), as well as individual problems.[4] In light of critiques of the concept by scholars like Tom Schuller (2000) and

Stephen Samuel Smith and Jessica Kulynych (2002), this study's qualitative approach holds the concept of social capital in question. Furthermore, this study considers social capital at the *individual*, rather than the community, level. I see social capital as a characteristic *both* of individuals *and* of the relationships among them: individuals bring social capital to a relationship, but there can be no social capital without that connection among them.[5]

Putnam (2000:2) makes the significant distinction between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital.[6] Bonding social capital is "exclusive" or "inward looking": it hardens clannish identities and homogenizes (Putnam 2000:2). Putnam (2000:2) gives the examples of elite country clubs, church book clubs for women, and ethnic fraternal organizations. In contrast, bridging social capital is "inclusive" or "outward looking": it connects people over and above various social differences (Putnam 2000:2). To illustrate, Putnam (2000:2) lists youth service organizations, ecumenical religious groups, and the civil rights movement. While both types of social capital can have positive *and* negative effects, the bonding variety has greater potential to stir animosity among diverse social groups (Putnam 2000:3). Woolcock (1998:170) makes a similar distinction between "integration and linkage," and so this study will attempt to distinguish between these two kinds of social capital as they relate to feminist consciousness. Last but certainly not least, Lisa J. Servon (2003) calls for examination of social capital formation in "othered groups" (p. 21), and Vivien Lowndes (2000:534) notes that discussions of social capital are disproportionately focused on male-dominated activities: this study will attempt to balance the scales.

Assumptions

While feminism and social capital are understood as conceptually distinct here, some degree of overlap may in fact exist. (For example, membership in an organization like NOW may be in itself a form of social capital.)[7] Another important assumption is that feminism is still a social force worthy of study. Sheila Tobias (1997) notes that as early as 10 years ago "some commentators began talking ambiguously about postfeminism," without ever specifying whether feminists had met their goals, whether these goals could be met without identity politics, or whether feminism was in retreat (pp. 244-245). In a postmodern social landscape, today many women, particularly young women or women whose perspectives traditionally have been marginalized (e.g., women of color, lesbians), renounce feminism, although they may agree with some of its goals.[8] That these goals still exist and that there are individuals and organizations fighting for their achievement provides justification for focusing on feminism in this study.

Furthermore, this study of feminist consciousness and social capital takes place in the context of intersecting social hierarchies, as described by Lynn Weber (2001). Weber (2001:17, 23) defines race, class, gender, and sexuality as hierarchical "social systems" rather than as static, innate attributes of people. She holds that race, class, gender, and sexuality hierarchies pervade all elements of our lives (Weber 2001:4). Furthermore, these power systems are and have been *constantly* and *everywhere* at work; each system is complex, related to the others, and always changing (Weber 2001:4, 17). Weber (2001:6) implicitly argues that overall, no one oppression is worse than another: no one

group can claim the greatest persecution.[9] In addition, oppression and privilege cannot be fully understood apart from one another (Weber 2001:8).

On the macro level, those groups with power perpetuate it through the exploitation of others (Weber 2001:4). This exploitation is well integrated in U.S. social, political, and economic institutions, although exploited groups struggle and at times succeed in altering aspects of these entities (Weber 2001:5). Weber's (2001:6) framework rests on the assumption not only that such social change is possible, but also that it should be a goal of sociological research. Race, class, gender, and sexuality have *grave* effects on social life and are buttressed by ideologies that rationalize or support the position of dominant groups (Weber 2001:17-18, 24). For example, powerful ideologies state that the United States is or ought to be a "gender-blind, race-blind, classless, and sexually restrained society" (Weber 2001:20). Like ideologies, stereotypes are tools that perpetuate the power of dominant groups (Weber 2001:18). But subordinate groups can counter negative stereotypes through collective positive self-definition (Weber 2001:24).

On the micro level, Weber (2001) posits that privilege is often invisible: "It obscures rather than illuminates the unequal power relationships on which the systems of oppression are built" (p. 4). Conversely, a lack of power tends to focus attention on those relationships (Weber 2001:4). Those in dominant groups take for granted their superiority, while subordinate groups either work to assert their own worth or internalize the oppressive images of themselves (Weber 2001:25). Those who have internalized such images not only may have negative views of themselves but also may attempt to negate the value of others in oppressed groups (Weber 2001:28). Significantly,

individuals in any given situation differently experience the ubiquitous forces of race, class, gender, and sexuality, whether or not they are conscious of these hierarchies (Weber 2001:19). As a result, "while those who suffer the unfairness are more likely to see it, we all participate in discriminatory systems *with and without* knowing that or how we have done so" (Weber 2001:20). Despite the power of these systems, some individuals live lives that contradict patterns of oppression (Weber 2001:22). Through their resistance and their struggles to survive, they develop skills and talents (Weber 2001:23). Dominant groups may use these individuals to argue that discrimination does not exist (Weber 2001:22). Like Collins (1998), Weber (2001:29) asserts that oppressed groups need to speak the truth about pervasive oppression publicly and to constantly adjust their resistance to shifting strategies of containment. Weber (2001:10) also implicitly questions thinking in terms of dichotomies: in interaction between, say, a Black male manager and a While female secretary, an analysis predicated on polar opposites would be partial at best. This study attempts a similarly careful understanding of power dynamics.

<div align="center">Methodology</div>

Quantitative methods for measuring attitudes towards women have been in use for more than 50 years, but generally these instruments tend to omit those items about which feminists often disagree, while collapsing various theoretical approaches into a monolithic feminism (Henley et al. 1998:318). Consequently, qualitative studies may be better suited to capturing the shades of meaning inherent in individuals' interpretations of

"feminism." A qualitative approach is also useful in terms of social capital: "Despite its association to date with game theory and abstract modelling [*sic*], the social capital debate could make more use of qualitative case studies and individual 'life histories'" (Lowndes 2000:536). Therefore, this exploratory research project uses a qualitative approach. Specifically, semi-structured interviews with current and former members of a midwestern NOW chapter, located in a mid-sized city, begin to elucidate how feminist consciousness shapes social capital, and vice versa. As Steinar Kvale (1996) notes: "Interviews are particularly suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world" (p. 105).

A feminist myself for much of my life, I have devoted little time to feminist community activism. In an effort to become more involved, I attended a Women's Equality Day event in August 2001. As part of the morning's activities, long-time members of a midwestern NOW chapter gave an overview of the organization's significant contributions to the community. Each of the women who spoke reminded me that much of what I enjoy about my life is possible only through the activism of women who came before me. Equally important, the speakers hinted at their own personal transformations, and I was fascinated by the sense of what their stories could teach. I thought about how wonderful it would be to *really talk* to any of these women about their feminism and their lives.

I want to be explicit about my relationship to this NOW chapter and the ethical issues involved. Since my interest was piqued at the Women's Equality Day event, I

have tried to become more involved, although in fact few demands are made on my time. Perhaps a sign of declining social capital, the chapter no longer meets regularly; instead it rallies members for specific events. Officers also send out their own newsletter, as well as e-mail messages forwarded from the state NOW office. I attended a meeting in December 2001 that addressed the future of the organization, at which time I offered to assist the woman who took over the treasurer and membership duties. (In fact, there has been no work for me to do in this capacity.) I then paid student dues to NOW.

I contend that my sincere interest in the organization has strengthened, rather than weakened, my analysis. At the very least, it has built trust during the interview process. I have been open about my dual commitments to my research and the organization. While I could not anticipate every difficult and/or uncomfortable situation, protection of participants remains my first priority as I work in the border between observation and participation. I see the near inactivity of the chapter as an advantage, rather than a disadvantage, of this research project. Because few demands have been made on my time and resources, I have been better able to focus on the stories that I have been told. And the stories have been the participants' stories, not my own, especially to the extent that we have discussed the past rather than the present.

I conducted in-depth interviews with five current or former members of the NOW chapter. The sample was both purposive and theoretical. Initial interviews ranged from nearly an hour to over two hours; I conducted follow-up interviews with three of the five participants. With the informed consent of participants, I used my notes and an audiotape recording to carefully transcribe each interview. A Microsoft Access database facilitated

coding. Analytical tools included the articulation model, an understanding of intersecting social hierarchies, and grounded theory, as well as my general feminist approach. I revised the code list and resultant concept map repeatedly as I went back to the interview transcripts, what the participants actually said, again and again. What I write here is my best understanding of what participants generously shared with me.

Limitations and Contributions

Time is a significant limitation of this research project. During the interviews, participants shared their recollections with me—memories from childhood, reminiscences of their first revelations about feminism, and stories of their activism from up to 30 years ago. Over time, we all forget details, while intervening events and our growing understanding of ourselves shape those experiences that we do remember. While it might have been interesting to see these past events as through the lens of a camera, I am in fact more interested in subjective recollections, how these women interpret past events now.[10] Furthermore, this research project, from the first interviews through the writing of this text, has taken over a year and a half. During that time, I have worked on it sporadically. The participants have surely changed during that time, as have I. I believe that my understanding of our conversations has deepened over these months. The interviews themselves must be understood as occurring at specific points in time: these women discussed their experiences as they then understood them. And, of course, their understanding comes to this text through my analytical lens.

My findings are obviously not intended to reflect the experiences of all women, or even all members of midwestern NOW chapters. Four of the five women that I interviewed are or have been chapter officers, and three are still active members. As a result, what these women share about their activism and relationships is likely not typical of other chapter members. Certainly there is no scientific backing for the idea that the midwestern city where I interviewed is representative of the United States; rather, it is a location of convenience. As a result, this site has some limitations. It is a conservative community, and it has a significant population of senior citizens. Additionally, this particular city is highly segregated by race and by income, which may reduce the opportunities for *bridging* social capital to develop. The advantage, however, of being in such a conservative location is that, if feminist consciousness seems to make bonds and bridges, rather than breaks, *here*, it may do so in moderate or liberal communities. Conversely, less opposition to feminist ideology in more moderate or liberal communities, less adversity, may reduce the incentives to form bonds and bridges (Frank D. Beck, personal communication, October 30, 2003). Future comparative research can examine feminist consciousness and social capital in other decades and areas of the United States.

Because community developers like Blakely (1999) argue that face-to-face relationships must form the foundation of democracy, and social critics like Wendell Berry (2001) point out that solutions to the world's problems lie in viable neighborhoods, it is *essential* to understand the factors that shape these communities of place. Since by many accounts the feminist movement is still "alive and kicking" (Kerr 1999:205),

understanding its impact on social capital can help community developers and feminist activists alike make informed choices regarding their goals as they relate to the preservation of democracy. Highlighting the impact of feminist consciousness on social capital may indicate the ways that feminist ideology and organizations continue to transform society. As for social capital, this study may build our theoretical understanding of the individual level, which has received little empirical attention. Perhaps the greatest significance of this research is its real-world application. If feminist consciousness contributes to bonding and bridging social capital, then policy changes that promote gender equality could have the additional positive result of building social capital.[11] Since excessive individualism in the United States may be eroding the foundation on which our freedom rests, increasing social capital is an appropriate antidote. Also, from a political perspective, accentuating feminism's *positive* aspects may speed the rate of social change regarding women's issues.

Michael Lerner (1996) credits "the power of the [feminist] theory to explain so much about our lives" (p. 165). In particular, he embraces "the ethics of care" of the women's movement as foundational for his "politics of meaning" (Lerner 1996:166-167).[12] The "politics of meaning" is an effort to create a world in which human beings, in all of our diversity, are valued (Lerner 1996:4). In this world, a connection to a higher spiritual and ethical purpose fills our lives with meaning (Lerner 1996:4). Part of creating this world involves bridging the gaps between identity groups, even between the apparent oppressed and oppressors: "The *most effective way* to continue . . . struggles against oppression is to begin to recognize the pain and fundamental humanity of those

who have in various ways been complicit with systems of oppression" (Lerner 1996:168).

In a world increasingly fragmented into interest groups and distorted by power struggles,

the more that we can understand about how to preserve and strengthen our battered

relationships, the better.

Endnotes

[1] NOW's name, the National Organization *for* Women, emphasizes its membership of women *and* men interested in gender equality (Ferree and Hess 2000:65).

[2] Not everyone is persuaded by Putnam's (2000) argument. See, for just one example, Joel Sobel (2002).

[3] Interestingly, one of the women interviewed for this project talked about all of the work that she gets done while watching television. For example, she prepares NOW newsletters for mailing, and these bulletins are vital to the chapter's communication with members.

[4] This definition of social capital must be understood in terms of the theoretical treatments of the concept, as summarized in Chapter II. Specifically, this definition concurs with that of James Coleman and Robert Putnam (Brehm and Rahn 1997:999). Additionally, social capital is certainly not restricted to "citizens," nor is it synonymous with "community." As George Hillery (1955:45) notes, "community" has been defined variously, with most definitions including social interaction and common geographic area. Individuals' social capital is not necessarily limited to their geographic space, nor is it simply interpersonal interaction—it is also the potential and actual mutual utility inhering in the relationships that underlie that interaction.

[5] Coleman, for example, sees social capital as intangible and inhering in relationships, rather than in individuals (McLean, Schultz, and Steger 2002; Wall et al. 1998).

[6] See Bob Edwards and Michael W. Foley (2001:12) for discussion of other terms used to connote bonding and bridging social capital. Barber (1998b) similarly distinguishes between communitarian and strong democratic civil societies. The primary actor in we-versus-them communitarian civil society is "the clansman: the bondsman tied to community by birth, blood, and bathos" (Barber 1998b:24). In contrast, strong democracies, composed of public, private, and civic spheres, allow us to "think of ourselves as having plural identities and multiple purposes rather than singular destinies defined exclusively by blood or by economics" (Barber 1998b:34). Strong democracies are plural and inclusive.

[7] Membership in an organization like NOW is likely *not* a form of social capital where one merely sends in one's dues.

[8] Myra Marx Ferree and Beth B. Hess (2000:89) argue that feminism's appeal exclusively to middle-class White women is a myth: they cite data from 1970, 1980, and 1991 that show that Black women have consistently viewed the feminist movement more favorably than have White women.

[9] I agree that, evaluated collectively, no scale of oppression can rank one '-ism' as worse than another. But Weber (2001) *does* participate in the ranking of oppressions by omitting many other important hierarchies (ethnicity, nationality, physical ability, age, and size, to name a few). She discusses this omission on page 18 of her text. Note also that I follow Weber (2001) in her use of the terms "White" and "Black."

[10] At the same time, I do not engage in the kind of formal narrative analysis described by Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson (1996:54-82). See Chapter III of this text for a description of methods used here.

[11] Note, however, that both movements and organizations can weaken if they are successful in removing the sources of adversity that are their reason for existence (Frank D. Beck, personal communication, October 30, 2003).

[12] See for example Tong (1989:166-168) for a critique of the "ethics of care" concept. Lerner (1996:166-168) is well aware of this debate.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feminism

Rather than addressing the vast literature on feminism as an ideology, the focus

here will be on feminism as a movement in the United States.[1] Specifically, a quick

overview of the second wave of the movement will place NOW within its proper

historical perspective.[2] The second wave of feminism in the United States has significant

ties to the civil rights, antiwar, and other movements of the New Left (Tronto 1995:403),

as well as to the work of politically active women since the suffrage campaign of the first

wave (Tobias 1997:71). Recruiting through informal networks or through workplace

contacts and gaining strength through consciousness-raising groups, the feminist

movement achieved impressive gains in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s (Reger

2001:87). In less than 10 years, the movement attained the Equal Pay Act, programs for

affirmative action, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and Titles

VII and IX (Sealander and Smith 1995:259). In just 30 years, the way that women and

men relate to one another has dramatically altered, as has women's position in the

economy, politics, and the media (Lerner 1996:298). For example, the percentage of the

female population in the labor force grew from 27.4 to 57.3 between 1940 and 1991

(Ferree and Hess 2000:4). Women were only 35 percent of undergraduates in 1900; in

1991, they were 55 percent (Ferree and Hess 2000:7). In short, women now have greater control over their labor, both productive and reproductive (Ferree and Hess 2000:22).

Myra Marx Ferree and Beth B. Hess (2000) assert that feminist perspectives are "alive and well" (p. xx). Ferree and Hess (2000) further suggest that early second wave feminist organizations can be divided into roughly two "strands," one older and one younger, with differences in style and structure resulting from specific historical circumstances (p. 57). In brief, the "bureaucratic" feminist organizations focused on well-defined goals, while "collectivist" organizations valued the means as much or more so than the ends (Ferree and Hess 2000:57).[3] Women in the "collectivist" organizations tended to be early baby-boomers who embraced idealism and learned about critical theory and the mechanisms of political oppression from the civil rights movement and the New Left (Ferree and Hess 2000:59). In contrast, the "bureaucratic" members were more likely to be born during the Great Depression and influenced by the New Deal; they believed that limitations on women's material success could be removed by working through the existing system (Ferree and Hess 2000:59). Jo Reger (2000:2059) points out that these bureaucratic organizations came to resemble the very institutions that they targeted for transformation.

History of NOW

NOW is the primary example of "bureaucratic" feminist organizations emerging during the 1960s, and an overview of its evolution in relation to the feminist movement provides needed historical context for this study. President Kennedy created a Commission on the Status of Women, whose findings eventually led to the creation of

State Commissions (Ferree and Hess 2000:61-63). In reaction to a thwarted effort to get

the EEOC to enforce Title VII's sex clause in June 1966, 24 delegates to the third annual

conference of the State Commissions on the Status of Women, as well as Betty Friedan,

formed NOW (Ferree and Hess 2000:65). Some view the launch of NOW as the start of

the second wave of feminism in the United States (Pelak, Taylor, and Whittier 1999:154).

The founders wanted NOW to effectively lobby for women's rights, just as the National

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked for African-

Americans (Ferree and Hess 2000:65).[4] Evidence that a combination of material

resources and social networks promotes effective mobilization, members of the State

Commissions who also belonged to labor unions used union mimeograph machines and

phone banks to start NOW (Ferree and Hess 2000:30). By its first meeting in October

1966, NOW had rallied hundreds of women and men (Ferree and Hess 2000:65). Initial

members tended to be well-educated and occupationally elite, with connections to media

and government (Ferree and Hess 2000:65). NOW's early successes included

embarrassing the EEOC into admitting that airline policies requiring female flight

attendants to retire when getting married or turning 35, as well as sex-specific

employment advertisements, constitute discrimination (Ferree and Hess 2000:65-66).

Even though some second wave feminists came to the movement through civil

rights activism, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, in denying membership to

NOW, promoted the growth of separate movements for gender and for race (Ferree and

Hess 2000:66). NOW faced the challenge of giving the feminist movement direction,

and its 1967 advocacy of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and of repeal of anti-

abortion legislation cost it members (Ferree and Hess 2000:66).[5] Pro-labor activists, particularly those in the United Auto Workers, saw ERA support as detrimental to employed women (because it might counter laws already benefiting working women). Others, who felt that the pro-Choice stance was too radical, formed a now defunct splinter group called the Women's Equity Action League or WEAL (Daniels 1991:584; Ferree and Hess 2000:66, 110; Pelak et al. 1999:160). WEAL's more conservative position gave NOW the chance to explore more confrontational tactics early on, like strikes and large demonstrations (Ferree and Hess 2000:66). During the 1970s ERA campaign, NOW distributed buttons printed "59¢" to publicize the wage gap (NOW 2002). By the mid-1970s, though, NOW began to work through mainstream electoral politics (Ferree and Hess 2000:144).

NOW's main concerns by 1979 indicated its broad focus: the threat of nuclear energy, homemakers' rights, lesbian and gay rights, women's exploitation in the private sphere, and workplace sex segregation (Pelak et al. 1999:157). NOW popularized the phrase "women who work outside the home," as well as the slogan, "every mother is a working mother" (NOW 2002). Current official NOW focus areas include the ERA, women's health issues, racism and homophobia, and violence against women (NOW 2002). Because feminist interests are varied and conflicting, the New Feminist Movement, as the second wave is sometimes called, has a wide variety of connections to different political interest groups, although these alliances do not usually capture the whole movement (Ferree and Hess 2000:137). Ferree and Hess (2000) cite Mark Granovetter's discussion of the strength in such "weak ties" and note that broad-based

organizations like NOW can choose among potential allies and find a balance among their many constituencies' priorities and goals (Ferree and Hess 2000:137).[6] They conclude that "an important aspect of NOW's activities in recent years has been to educate its members to expand their vision to encompass a variety of feminist perspectives, and to support one another's issues" (Ferree and Hess 2000:137). Ferree and Hess (2000:164, 182) point, for example, to collaborative efforts around reproductive rights, as well as cross-generational activism. NOW is the most conspicuous feminist organization that can be classified as political and educational, meaning that it focuses on pressuring existing institutions and informing policy-makers and the general public (Ferree and Hess 2000:109).

NOW eventually developed the current structure of regional, state, and local units, which are fairly autonomous but clearly part of the larger bureaucracy (Ferree and Hess 2000:67; NOW 2002).[7] Ferree and Hess (2000:197) describe this evolution as part of the weaving together of the bureaucratic and collectivist strands of feminism across the movement (see also Pelak et al. 1999:158). NOW at the national level started out as bureaucratic, "an elite lobbying group in Washington," but became more collectivist and less hierarchical through the increasing participation of grassroots members, "a network of autonomous local units whose members engaged in a variety of task forces and direct actions" (Ferree and Hess 2000:133-134, 197). Chapter members arguably put their social capital to work in promoting feminist causes. Local NOW chapters issued their own monthly newspapers, while the national office distributed a periodical, *Do It NOW* (Ferree and Hess 2000:78). Today NOW has more than 600 local chapters (NOW 2002).

To be clear, though, NOW has not entirely lost its bureaucratic element, even at the chapter level.

NOW grew dramatically from 15,000 members and an annual budget of $160,000 in 1972 to 220,000 members and an annual budget of $13,000,000 in 1982 (Ferree and Hess 2000:134).[8] The organization boasted 500,000 contributing members in 2002 (NOW 2002). With this growth came more involvement in both national and state electoral politics, sometimes with the counterproductive result that NOW's national level and state offices backed different candidates (Ferree and Hess 2000:134, 144).[9] The focus on politics caused dissension among members, some of whom sought "a return to the radical goals and unconventional tactics of NOW's earlier years" (Ferree and Hess 2000:134). As a result, the leadership of NOW seemed to give up on the electoral arena during the mid-1980s, causing former NOW president and political scientist Eleanor Smeal to form the Fund for the Feminist Majority, or FFM (Ferree and Hess 2000:134, 192).

Like FFM and Third Wave, an organization of mainly young Black and White feminists, today NOW increasingly combines its usual, more conventional, tactics of voting and lobbying with the more radical early approach of street protest (Ferree and Hess 2000:192). For example, NOW activists organized the first Take Back The Night marches to protest harassment and violence against women (NOW 2002). NOW and abortion groups also held a national demonstration in 1989 that brought together more than 300,000 protesters of abortion restrictions (Pelak et al. 1999:163). On its Internet site, NOW presents additional impressive numbers:

NOW re-instituted mass marches for women's rights in the face of conventional wisdom that marches were a technique that went out with the 1960s. A march in support of the Equal Rights Amendment drew more than 100,000 people to Washington, D.C. in 1978. NOW's March for Women's Lives drew 750,000 supporters to Washington, D.C. in 1992, for the largest abortion rights demonstration ever. In 1995, NOW organized the first mass demonstration to focus on the issue of violence against women—and drew a quarter million people to the Mall. The 1996 March to Fight the Right in San Francisco drew more than 50,000 activists to kick off an electoral season focused on efforts to defend affirmative action. (NOW 2002)

Not surprisingly, NOW is "often perceived by the media and the public as the sole representative of organized feminism" (Ferree and Hess 2000:109).[10]

Critiques of Feminism and NOW

From the beginning of the second wave, feminism has demonstrated "universalizing impulses" that present women as homogenous and fundamentally different from men (Joan W. Scott 1999:72). Furthermore, feminist analysis has often reflected the perspectives of White, middle-class women of Western European descent (Nicholson 1990:1). For example, African-American women have confronted various forms of racism, including "indifference to their concerns, disregard of their contributions, [and] patronizing efforts to 'recruit' and 'educate' them to support goals and priorities established by White women" (Ferree and Hess 2000:123). Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991) perceptively notes that even the feminist historians who discuss the roots of feminism's second wave in the civil rights and New Left movements tend to present gender as the only contested issue: they ignore "the racial consolidation of the struggle," its construction of Whiteness (p. 12). The concept of sisterhood, a rallying point for unity in the United States, obscures the ambivalent participation of many

women in the feminist movement (Dill 1995:277), women whose "primary identification may be with their community rather than their gender" (Tronto 1995:405). While the lack of inclusive diversity in the women's movement emerged as a major shortcoming, Susan Faludi (1991) documented in great detail a conservative backlash against feminism in the 1980s.[11]

As part of "the backbone of the New Feminist Movement" (Ferree and Hess 2000:67), NOW's history reflects these struggles. For example, while Black feminist involvement during NOW's early years was considerable (Pauli Murray's instrumental role being just one example), many of NOW's major White leaders did not endorse the candidacy of Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm for the 1972 Democratic presidential nomination (Ferree and Hess 2000:96; NOW 2002). This failure "fueled suspicion that White women wanted support but not leadership from African-American women" (Ferree and Hess 2000:96). NOW instituted an affirmative action program in 1980, and today "women of racial and ethnic diversity" are one-third of NOW's national board and nineteen percent of its staff (NOW 2002).

NOW, as "the most visible and broad-based feminist organization" at the start of the second wave, also struggled over inclusion of lesbianism as a feminist issue (Ferree and Hess 2000:117). At the 1971 conference, despite protest from Friedan and delegates from the Midwest and South, NOW recognized "the oppression of lesbians as a legitimate concern of feminism" (Ferree and Hess 2000:118). Maren Lockwood Carden (1974:113) points out that this recognition did not cause a rift in the organization because the issue of lesbianism had already been settled at the local level, while Reger

(2000:2060) describes NOW's embrace of lesbian causes as also happening gradually but well *after* the 1971 conference.

Where do NOW's priorities and strategies fit in the broad range of theoretical orientations within feminism? Tong (1989) describes liberal, Marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, existentialist, and postmodern feminism. She identifies NOW with liberal feminism (Tong 1989:2, 13, 27, 28). Liberal feminists typically believe that the oppression of women is based on legal and customary barriers to women's access to and success in the public sphere (Tong 1989:2). NOW is often subject to the criticisms leveled against liberal feminism in general. For example, communitarians argue that liberal feminists' overemphasis on individual rights keeps people from coming together (Tong 1989:32). They also accuse liberal feminists of believing that women can and should be more like men, since liberal feminists tend to emphasize the "citizen" or "worker" over the "wife" or "mother" (Tong 1989:32-33). Socialist feminists similarly add that liberal feminists "put an extraordinary premium on liberty—on the rational, autonomous, independent, self-determining, isolated, separated, unique person being able to think, do, and be whatever he or she deems worthy" (Tong 1989:35). Nevertheless, many, perhaps most, of the legal and educational reforms benefiting women have been the result of liberal feminists' efforts (Tong 1989:38).

Although NOW is generally associated with liberal feminism (Tong 1989:2, 13, 27, 28), individual members may claim other kinds of feminism, such as radical feminism. Most radical feminists believe that women's oppression is "the first, the most widespread, and the deepest form of human oppression" (Tong 1989:71). In addition to

significant contributions to women's culture, radical feminists have called attention to men's attempts to control women's bodies and sexuality, for example through violence, pornography, and legislation on reproduction (Tong 1989:71-72). Various radical feminists have promoted solutions ranging from creating an androgynous society to supplanting patriarchy with matriarchy (Tong 1989:95). They have proposed both transforming heterosexuality and abandoning it in favor of lesbianism, autoeroticism, or celibacy (Tong 1989:95). Some have rejected biological motherhood, while others have embraced it (Tong 1989:84). Socialist feminists criticize radical feminism for its biological determinism, its universal claims about differences between men and women, and its limited attention to issues of race and class (Tong 1989:128, 130). Others point out that its focus on psychological and sexual issues might make it irrelevant to many women dealing with more salient kinds of oppression (Tong 1989:133). At the same time, radical feminism has revealed that the oppression of women *as women* is unlikely to end through the achievements of liberal or Marxist feminism alone (Tong 1989:137). As Tong (1989) points out, "All movements need radicals, and the women's movement is no exception" (p. 138).

Empirical Investigations

Judith Sealander and Dorothy Smith (1995:273), in their study of the feminist movement in Dayton, Ohio, found that organizations with less radical agendas (e.g., the Dayton YWCA) began to offer many of the services originally provided by feminist organizations. The authors conclude that mainstreaming ultimately resulted in the sacrifice of the goals of these early feminist organizations (Sealander and Smith

1995:273). Some believe that the feminist movement in fact ground to a near halt in the 1990s, perhaps as a result of its conflicting objectives, which disturb "either-or" U.S. political thinking (Tronto 1995:396, 410).[12] But the strength and numbers of women's organizations nationally suggest that the movement continues to be vital, although today the theories and objectives of feminism are many.

Most studies of feminism specifically discussing NOW have focused on the national level. For example, Jo Freeman (1975) devotes more than 30 pages to national NOW in her book; Carden (1974) does the same in *The New Feminist Movement*. Barbara Ryan (1992) is also concerned with the national level, as are Ferree and Hess (2000). Suzanne Staggenborg (1989), an exception, examines the Chicago NOW chapter and finds that it remains generally centralized and formalized, which strengthens the organization but leaves little room for innovation.

An excellent empirical investigation of feminism in NOW chapters that highlights chapter diversity is Reger's (2001) "Motherhood and the Construction of Feminist Identities."[13] In addition to analyzing the documents of grassroots NOW chapters in both New York and Cleveland, Reger (2001) examines what she terms "activist stories" of members (p. 88). Specifically, she interviewed 26 of the leading members, using an intensive, semi-structured approach, and she also conducted open-ended interviews with three informants working at NOW's regional, state, or national levels.[14] Reger's (2001) concern with group identity construction, her methodology, and her emphasis on locally constructed meanings are relevant to this study. Specifically, she describes how previous studies of NOW have presumed a single feminist identity for the entire organization.

Instead, scholars should "examine more closely the influence and cultural forces of grassroots level activism" (Reger 2001:107). Reger's (2001) focus on "activist stories" as a kind of abbreviated life history is a useful model for this study.

<div align="center">Social Capital</div>

The term "social capital" was apparently first used by Lyda J. Hanifan during World War I, when she attempted to redress its lack in rural areas (Rae 2002:xi). Explaining that she did not mean property or money, Hanifan (1916) described social capital as "that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of people, namely goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse . . . ." Since World War I, other writers, such as Jane Jacobs, have independently uncovered this idea of "social capital" (Rae 2002:xii).

Schuller (2000:28) makes the important point that the main aspects of social capital have long been examined by social scientists who never use this particular term. Topics like trust, networks, and norms are not new, but their arrangement under the term "social capital," and the uses to which this concept is put, may well be (Schuller 2000:28). Schuller (2000:29) explains the popularity of the term in part through intellectual trends that seek to harmonize open markets and social values: the two words in "social capital" have broad political appeal. But Smith and Kulynych (2002:129) question the appropriateness of this particular term, "social capital," because it obscures the *conflict* between community and capitalism, and it reduces resonant webs of communal relations to mere economic transactions.

Jan Flora (1998) contends that social capital may be best used as a heuristic device for generating discussion because it "places emphasis on the will and capacity of people to solve problems and improve their lives in a joint enterprise" (p. 503). He feels that social capital's life as a useful empirical concept will be short (Flora 1998:503). Schuller (2000) agrees that social capital works best as a heuristic device, but he is more optimistic about its contributions when methodology matches its definition. While the following review of literature addresses social capital as a fairly straightforward concept, the qualitative approach of this project, in line with Schuller's (2000) and Smith and Kulynych's (2002) thinking, seeks to hold the concept of social capital in question.

Operating from a sociological standpoint, Ellen Wall, Gabriele Ferrazzi, and Frans Schryer (1998) review the origins, evolution, and current usage of the concept of social capital. Examining both research and theoretical literature, Wall et al. (1998) make several important distinctions, for example between power-focused European interpretations of social capital and the American attention to mutual relationships. Three scholars have shaped our understanding of social capital: Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and the aforementioned Robert Putnam (Wall et al. 1998). Bourdieu focuses on methods for preserving one's place in a stratified social structure; Coleman understands social capital through economic rationality; Putnam sees social capital as intrinsically related to civic responsibility (Wall et al. 1998).

Nan Lin (2001:26-28) reveals several conceptual problems with these founding conceptualizations: 1) Coleman and Putnam's assertion that social capital is collective (rather than individual) means that it can become conflated with concepts like norms and

trust; 2) All three theorists' attention to closed, dense groups precludes mobility and relationships across class lines; 3) Coleman's idea that social capital is suggested by its particular effects presents a tautology (effects determine their cause); and 4) Coleman's position that social capital is not quantifiable means that his arguments are not falsifiable. Lin's (2001) complex theory of social capital seeks to amend these flaws. In brief, he posits that structural position, network location, and purpose of action all shape social capital, which results in specific returns: "The theory of social capital focuses on the resources embedded in one's social network and how access to and use of such resources benefit the individual's actions" (Lin 2001:76, 55). Michael W. Foley, Bob Edwards, and Mario Diani (2001) concur that "social capital is best conceived as access (networks) plus resources" (p. 277).

The number of anthropology and sociology articles that discuss social capital has doubled since 1990 (Wall et al. 1998). Schuller (2000:29) attributes the concept's popularity partly to its use in a presidential State of the Union address and Putnam's (2000) declaration that television is the principal offender in shrinking civic engagement. Perhaps the best aspect of the term is its current utility in a variety of fields, thus providing a common language for the multidisciplinary task of community development (Woolcock 1998:188). But the wide use of the term is problematic without clear conceptual definitions, and, as Schuller (2000:30) notes, appropriate methodology.[15] The World Bank Group (2001), which follows the current research on the concept and is arguably its most important proponent, declares simply that "social capital refers to the norms and networks that enable collaborative action." Similarly, Lin (2001) defines the

term as "investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace," be it the political, economic, labor, or community marketplace (p. 19). Lin (2001) argues that his definition is consistent with all scholarly definitions to date (including those of Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam).

Empirically, for communities, high levels of social capital seem to be related to economic growth, low crime rates, effectual political systems, and lower incidences of delinquency (Brehm and Rahn 1997).[16] Because social capital cannot be measured directly, researchers have used various indicators (Wall et al. 1998). Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam all use membership in voluntary associations or organizations as an indicator (Wall et al. 1998). Bourdieu has also relied on individuals' titles (e.g., noble, professional), while later researchers in his tradition counted the number of ties to those with the same profession and how often those ties had been used (Wall et al. 1998). Coleman analyzed family configurations; Putnam examined newspaper readership (Wall et al. 1998). Each of these indicators is problematic but makes some sense in the context of the researchers' specific emphases. Wall et al. (1998) find that too often indicators of social capital and the determinants of those indicators are not sufficiently distinguished. At the same time, it may not always be feasible to empirically untangle indicators and determinants (Schuller 2000:332). For example, John Brehm and Wendy Rahn (1997) analyze the reciprocal connection between civic involvement and trust, which together create social capital: participating produces trust, which leads to greater participation in a spiraling fashion.

In fact, Brehm and Rahn (1997) are apparently the first scholars to empirically examine social capital at the level of the individual. While Kimberly Lochner, Ichiro Kawachi, and Bruce Kennedy (1999:260) argue that "social capital is a feature of the social structure, not of the individual actors within the social structure," Brehm and Rahn (1997) reason that, without individuals, there would be no social capital. Using General Social Survey data from 1972 to 1994, Brehm and Rahn (1997) designate civic engagement, interpersonal trust, and confidence in democratic institutions as endogenous variables; the authors also analyze a number of exogenous variables. They find a positive relationship between interpersonal trust and civic participation, although the connection is stronger moving from participation to trust than vice versa. Their conclusion is a partial confirmation of Putnam's cycle of trust-engagement-trust, although Brehm and Rahn (1997) find that the reinforcing effect can spiral either up or down. Perhaps the most important outcome of this study is that confidence in democratic institutions can have an effect on trust, which means that governments may be able to counter declines in social capital. At the same time, individuals tend to transform their personal unhappiness into a lack of confidence in government institutions.

In any case, Brehm and Rahn (1997) assert that they have measured social capital at the individual level, as opposed to the community level used in previous studies. Following Brehm and Rahn (1997), Schneider et al. (1997) conducted a quantitative study and found that parental selection of children's schools increases parents' social capital. Also taking a quantitative approach, Richard Rose (1999) revealed that specific social networks improve individuals' success in particular sectors. This study will

likewise examine social capital at the individual level but will seek to understand it qualitatively.

Summary: Feminism and Social Capital

The second wave of the feminist movement in the United States dramatically changed life for women in the United States. As a result of the specific historical circumstances of its origin, NOW, as a key organization in the movement, is at once largely bureaucratic at the national level but more collective at the local level. This local autonomy allows NOW chapters to develop different identities and agendas, as Reger (2001) has shown. Like NOW's grassroots feminism, the concept of social capital also encompasses theoretically diverse orientations. Major contributors to social capital theory, Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam each vary in their emphases (Wall et al. 1998). Social capital may be simply defined as the norms and network of cooperative relationships that enable solutions to collective and individual problems. Often studied at the community level, social capital may be examined at the level of the individual, as Brehm and Rahn (1997) first demonstrated.

Lowndes (2000), in response to a study positing that women have sustained social capital in Britain, notes "the curious silence within the social capital debate about gender dynamics" (p. 533). Several researchers do make implicit connections between feminism and social capital. For example, Marilyn Gittell, Isolda Ortega-Bustamante, and Tracy Steffy (2000) posit that community development organizations (CDOs) run by women are effective at building social capital and therefore may serve as models for other

CDOs.[17] The researchers find that women-led CDOs approach projects holistically and work to build local participation and democracy (Gittell et al. 2000). These groups are creating "the norms, trust, and networks" (Gittell et al. 2000), both internally and externally, that promote social capital through the collaborative and personal work of their leaders. The resulting partnerships not only encourage the civic participation of individuals but also unite various organizations in both formal and informal, community and farther-reaching alliances (Gittell et al. 2000). In short, the participation that women-led CDOs foster builds social capital and facilitates subsequent social change and citizenship (Gittell et al. 2000). Furthermore, the "Feminist Theory and Grassroots Women" section of the article affirms that there may be a conceptual link between feminism and social capital, and that women's views on individual feminist issues must be understood at the intersection of gender, race, and class.

Sociologists Susan Stall and Randy Stoecker (1997) are similarly interested in women's ways of promoting social capital, although they do not use that term: they compare two ideal types in urban community organizing, the conventional Saul Alinsky model (in which communities organize for power) and what they term "the women-centered model" (in which organizing builds community relationships). In the end, Stall and Stoecker (1997) conclude that both approaches are necessary. Elisabeth S. Clemens (1999) is explicitly interested in social capital and women's associations, but she focuses on the late 1800s and early 1900s. She concludes that "in particular, the case of the woman movement [*sic*] underscores the importance of moving beyond quantitative questions—How many people participate? How often?—in order to map the distribution

of social capital across multiple formal organizations and domains of civic activity" (p.

637). This qualitative research project begins that mapping process by describing and

analyzing the connection between feminist consciousness and social capital in a

midwestern NOW chapter.

Endnotes

[1] The literature on feminism as a movement is also quite broad. For an overview, see
Cynthia F. Pelak, Verta Taylor, and Nancy Whittier (1999).

[2] This discussion concentrates on the second wave, rather than on the emerging third
wave of younger feminists. Additionally, as Freeman (1975:71) points out, a social
movement *organization* like NOW must not be confused with the women's movement
itself.

[3] Reger (2000:2058-59) divides the second wave of the feminist movement into two
branches: liberal, epitomized by NOW, and radical/socialist. She considers
organizational forms as a secondary issue (Reger 2000:2058-59). Ferree and Hess
(2000:57) argue convincingly that organizational forms are significant, since all of the
feminist organizations at the start of the second wave were concerned in reality with both
rights and liberation, both reform and revolution.

[4] NOW's statement of purpose includes commitments:

> To take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of
> American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in
> *truly equal partnership with men* . . . . NOW is dedicated to the proposition that
> women, first and foremost, are human beings, who, like all other people in our
> society, must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential.
> (Ukpokodu 1994:2197)

[5] The ERA read simply: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged
by the United States or any State on account of sex" (Mansbridge 1986:1).

[6] How do such "weak ties" differ from bridging social capital? Although there is certainly overlap between the two concepts, weak ties are emotionally, socially, and frequently physically remote (Marsden and Campbell 1984). Sandra S. Smith (2000) gives the examples of "acquaintances, friends of friends, people with whom our social lives infrequently overlap" (p. 513). Putnam's (2000:2) definition and examples of bridging social capital indicate a greater proximity and level of contact.

[7] NOW also includes the NOW Foundation, the NOW Political Action Committee (PAC), and the NOW Equality PAC (NOW 2002). Completely independent of NOW is the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund (NOW 2002).

[8] Membership had shrunk to 200,000 and the annual budget had decreased to $8,000,000 in 1992 (Ferree and Hess 2000:134). But NOW membership grew in the 1990s, reaching 500,000 by 1999 (Pelak et al. 1999:163; Reger 2001:86). It is not clear whether or not the monetary figures have been adjusted for inflation.

[9] Two participants in this project, Maggie and Wilma, gave an example of national NOW endorsing a candidate without consulting their state NOW representatives, who had good reasons to support a different candidate. Wilma explained that state NOW leaders "had a *tremendous* amount to say about that, and it was very embarrassing for everybody concerned." Maggie added: "A lot of people don't believe there's that kind of independence [from national NOW], but there sure as heck is!"

[10] Ferree and Hess (2000:89) note, though, that the media and general public differ in their responses to NOW. They cite a 1989 *Time* poll in which 65 percent of all

participants "agreed that NOW is 'in touch with the average American woman,'" but, based on a single interview, *Time* asserted that NOW is rejected as out of touch (Ferree and Hess 2000:89).

[11] Faludi (1999) has apparently also documented the plight of men in the United States.

[12] Lerner (1996:299) argues that these conflicting objectives are precisely what led to the movement's success, by facilitating expansive questioning of women's traditional roles.

[13] While Reger's (2001) description of NOW and the two chapters under investigation provides helpful context for her readers, she fails to articulate in sufficient detail the criticisms leveled against NOW as a reflection of the interests of White, middle-class women. Reger (2001) also fails to present theoretical criticism of a recurring element in her analysis, Carol Gilligan's "ethic of care" (pp. 86, 93): see the final endnote in Chapter I of this text. She is, however, very clear about the limitations of her sample, and she recognizes the effects of race, class, and sexuality in shaping feminist identities.

[14] Reger (2001:89) promised both "anonymity and confidentiality" to her interviewees, the former being impossible in face-to-face interviews.

[15] For an overview of measures of social capital in thirteen empirical studies, see Krishna (2002:57-62).

[16] Note that there is not a clear cause-effect relationship between social capital and these variables (Frank D. Beck, personal communication, October 30, 2003), although Brehm and Rahn's (1997) diction is ambiguous on this point.

[17] Surprisingly, Gittell et al. (2000) do not define "social capital" clearly. Additionally, the methodology section contains few specifics about *when* the data-gathering took place and how long it lasted, *how* the researchers selected their sample of organizations, and *how* they analyzed or coded the data. Furthermore, the authors' new formulation of leadership grounded in women's activities problematically valorizes women's "moral fervor" (Gittell et al. 2000) and builds a theory around sex-based differences (socialized though these differences are, as the authors note).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Before addressing the specific methods used to gather and analyze data, this chapter describes my general approach to fieldwork as a feminist. I have also used particular analytical tools to answer my research questions: the articulation model, an understanding of intersecting social hierarchies, and grounded theory. The rest of the chapter addresses practical issues, including entry into the field, ethical considerations, sampling, profiles of participants, the interview process, and transcription and coding.

Analytical Tools

General Approach: Feminism

A feminist perspective informs my approach to this research project, including the sociological tools that I employ. In defining feminist methodology, Marjorie DeVault (1999) rightly resists oversimplification of the range of diverse work embodied in the term. Emphasizing that feminist methodology is "an evolving dialogue," rather than a static orthodoxy, DeVault (1999:28, 30-31) describes its basic criteria:

1. Feminist methodology focuses on the perspectives and concerns of women, all women.

2. Feminist methodology attempts to diminish hierarchy and harm in the research process.

3. Feminist methodology seeks transformation in women's lives or in the social systems that oppress women.

At the core of feminist methodology is a commitment to dealing with certain problems in standard social research and a shared history of activist learning (DeVault 1999:32).

DeVault (1999:67) suggests that feminist researchers can attend to the process of translation as they analyze their fieldnotes, and they can even work collaboratively with their participants during interviews to develop expressions of their experiences.[1] In other words, one can listen "as a woman," building understanding from similar experiences (about which one must be explicit and thoughtful), and one can also listen for the linguistic slippages, contradictions, and ambiguities—the translations—which may be significant for understanding women's experiences (DeVault 1999:67, 70, 71). To hear these efforts at translation, a researcher must pay careful attention to *how* participants say what they say and, specifically, any obstacles to expression (DeVault 1999:68). While it would be easy to ignore the broken, hesitant responses for their lack of grace and clarity, these segments of speech may reveal important elements of women's experiences that must be excavated (DeVault 1999:69). Furthermore, cues like "you know" may indicate that the participant is trying to work together to develop shared understanding (DeVault 1999:69). DeVault (1999:70) hints that the researcher must make a careful notation of that unspoken understanding; otherwise, it may be lost in the analysis, which would be a disservice to the participant. My personal interpretation of what is unspoken in an interview must be only a starting point for explaining what may be obscured in translation (DeVault 1999:71).

DeVault (1999:76, 78) also suggests that feminist researchers should question the representations that result from routine practices: standardized depictions may obscure women's lived experiences and suppress emotion. She suggests that "strategic borrowing" from the methods of conversation and discourse analysis may be effective mechanisms of excavation (DeVault 1999:77). For this reason, I have tried to capture as much detail in my transcriptions as possible.[2] For example, I recorded the often-overlooked elements of talk (e.g., "uh-huh"), the longer pauses, the laughter, the self-corrections, and so on (DeVault 1999:78). DeVault's (1999:78) idea to use ungrammatical commas is also a good one. As DeVault (1999:77) rightly notes, no one approach to transcription can capture everything, and body language, as important as it is, is often left out altogether. With participants' informed consent, I have tape recorded our interviews and listened to them during analysis.[3] Also, I have taken notes and filled them in immediately afterwards, in case the tape recording fails. As DeVault (1999) rightly observes: "Features of speech like pauses and emphasis provide clues to emotion and meaning, and these in turn are building blocks for the analysis" (p. 79). These details must not be lost in transcription.

Additionally, regardless of the audience, researchers need to think carefully about the consequences of the labels they choose (DeVault 1999:80). I am particularly concerned with my central concepts: feminism and social capital. Some of the theoretical writing and quantitative research about feminism concerns dividing feminists into different camps, such as liberal feminism and radical feminism. While I recognize the benefits (and necessity) of countering the idea that all feminists think the same way, I

am concerned about the tendency of these labels to oversimplify and to obscure the common ground. Even though NOW may be considered a liberal feminist organization, individual members may have very different beliefs, and so I am careful not to force participants into these categories. The concept of social capital is also problematic, in part because it is often used without being clearly defined. It is also a trendy concept. I have attempted to remain skeptical about whether this concept seems to fit participants' discussions of their social networks: do they really think of these relationships as a kind of "capital" or as something else? DeVault (1999:65) suggests that I need to be attuned more to what I have in common with my respondents than to my sociological preconceptions.

Articulation Model

At the same time, sociological preconceptions can be helpful in providing alternate ways to answer questions. In "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," Hall (1986) gives an explicit overview of the articulation model that is so well known in British cultural studies.[4] He explains that in British English, the word "articulate" has two meanings—both "to speak" and "to be connected" (my words), as in "an 'articulated' lorry (truck)," in which the cab and trailer are connected (Hall 1986:53). Articulation therefore is the specific linkage that *can* form a union of two different components, in particular circumstances (Hall 1986:53). The researcher seeks to find the specific conditions under which a connection may be made (Hall 1986:53). Hall (1986:53) asserts that the articulation model "enables us to think how an ideology empowers people, enabling them to begin to make some sense or

intelligibility of their historical situation, without reducing those forms of intelligibility to their socio-economic or class location or social position."[5] While Hall's (1986:53) discussion focuses on the articulation model's explanatory power for ideology and discourse, his attention to "the contingent, the non-necessary, connection" clearly offers an analytical approach to other topics.

I have used the articulation model as a broad framework to answer my first two research questions:

1. How do these midwestern feminists describe their involvement with the feminist movement and the growth of their feminist consciousness?

2. How has their feminist ideology affected the evolution of their social networks, both informal and formal, and how have these networks affected their feminist ideology?

Mary Ann Moffitt (1993b) uses Hall's articulation model and ethnographic methodology to understand how corporate image is formed at the intersection of individual lived experiences, the corporation's messages, and the social context. She finds that an individual's prior experiences related to the corporation, in this case State Farm Insurance, in part explain the meanings and the images that that individual now associates with that corporation (Moffitt 1993b). For example, one respondent's experience of his white-collar neighbor being overpaid by State Farm, his own experience being underpaid for contractual construction work done at State Farm, and his perception, based on this experience, that State Farm is anti-union, articulate to him a negative image of the company (Moffitt 1993b:52).[6]

I will use the model more loosely to articulate the meanings that emerge from the interview transcripts at the intersection of participants' lived experiences, their feminist consciousness, and their social capital. In other words, I will attempt to link what participants share about their backgrounds and past experiences with the way that they now attach meanings to their feminist beliefs and their social networks. As Moffitt (1993a) elsewhere notes: "The articulation model's interpretive power lies in its recognition that there are multiple factors of meaning, of which some are personally empowering and others defeating" (p. 247). I have tried to capture both the empowering and defeating facets of feminist consciousness and social capital.

Intersecting Social Hierarchies

While Hall (1986) calls attention to the formation of meaning at the intersection of personal experience, text or discourse, and historical and social context, Weber (2001) focuses specifically on power at the intersection of multiple social hierarchies. I use Weber's understanding of these power relationships to answer the third research question: how might each participant's location in these intersecting social hierarchies shape her description of the growth of her feminist consciousness and its impact on her social networks and vice versa? Crafting a research project in light of Weber's (2001) text complicates the investigation a great deal. But this complication fits her expectation that social analysis should be "complex—not superficial and simplistic" (Weber 2001:6). Generally, Weber (2001:6-8) calls on researchers to include multiple aspects of inequality, to investigate oppression and privilege in relation to one another, and to

analyze inequality in context. This context can help the researcher in the crucial task of linking micro and macro elements of analysis (Weber 2001:7).

Weber (2001) sees researchers' fundamental tools as the questions they bring to their analysis and their knowledge of race, class, gender, and sexuality as "systems [that] are historically and geographically/globally contextual, socially constructed power relations that are simultaneously expressed at both the macro level of social institutions and the micro level of individual life and personal identity" (p. 106). Because I have asked participants questions about their growth as feminists and what was hard about it, I have considered current controlling images of feminists (and how these images differ depending on race and sexuality, for example). I have also attended to the political processes and economic situations that shaped participants' paths to feminism and their development of social networks. Knowing that most of the participants are apparently White, middle- to upper-middle-class, and heterosexual, I have been explicit about how privilege may have impacted their views of feminism, and, at times more clearly, their social networks. Also significant is how they have been agents in resisting oppressive social constructions of women.

In attempting to understand power hierarchies in relation to my project, I have considered how NOW as an organization might differentially distribute power (including exclusion of potential members) and how this particular NOW chapter might manage power among those who join. As Collins (1998) also asks, "Who benefits?" Truthfully, I may not be able to answer this question fully, because another component of the power issue is my position as a researcher, which is complicated by my new membership in the

group whose members I have interviewed. My dual role is in part what has shaped my interest in the contextualized experiences of *individuals*, rather than an exploration of the group dynamics. Do these women feel empowered, and in what ways? How has a sense or lack of empowerment shaped the formation of their social networks? And how has this particular organization fostered their empowerment?

On the macro level, I have considered the institutional forces that shape participants' assessments of their situations. For example, how do (often negative) portrayals of feminists in the media affect participants' commitment to feminism and their ability, as feminists, to form relationships? How might economic circumstances, family expectations, and religious traditions encourage and/or discourage engagement through feminist and other progressive organizations? I have tried to recognize and resist the controlling images about these participants (e.g., older adults are politically conservative), as well as the stereotypes that they might embrace (e.g., conservative Christians are tyrannical). Weber (2001) discusses the American Dream ideology (p. 9)—how might this and others shape participants' narratives? On the micro level, I have attended not only to the content of participants' references to macro-level factors but also to the *ways* that institutional forces are discussed. As Weber (2001) notes, much can be revealed in people's silences and what they take for granted in their conversations (p. 66). I have gauged awareness of privilege and views of subordinate groups. Even if participants prioritize gender in discussions of their feminist growth, I must think through how their experiences have been shaped by race, class, and sexuality. Ignoring these three factors would yield incomplete understanding.

Weber (2001) further believes that analysis should empower, should move toward the goal of economic and social justice (p. 6). She quotes Collins (1998) on the democratic significance of translating and teaching our new ideas (Weber 2001:7). Sharing my research findings in an academic setting (e.g., a graduate research symposium) is one way of teaching new ideas. How might this research project be used to build a just society? I had initially and simplistically hoped to find that feminism might be a force for positive change through the creation of social capital. Having read Collins (1998) and Weber (2001), I am thoroughly convinced that race, class, and sexuality can not be side issues to gender; they must be as ever present in my analysis as they are in daily social life.

Grounded Theory

Although I bring an understanding of intersecting social hierarchies to the interview transcripts, I must also be open to what emerges. To answer the fourth and final research question, to understand how might feminism be a force for bonding and bridging social capital in the local community context, I have used aspects of grounded theory. In other words, from the details of the interviews have come concepts, which have resulted in the framework depicted in the appended concept map. The grounded theory approach requires that the researcher remain open to shades of meaning, to sub-categories, and to new or oppositional concepts emerging from participants' descriptions and explanations. Although I came to this research project with ideas about feminism and social capital, the patterns evident in the concept map emerged from the data and reflect what five current or previous members of a midwestern NOW chapter in a mid-

sized city had to say about their beliefs, their activism, and their relationships. Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1998) note that "grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action" (p. 12). As Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain, "concepts must 'earn their way' into a study rather than be blindly accepted and imposed on data" (p. 292). Specific tools for developing grounded theory that I have used in this study, all described in Strauss and Corbin (1998), include: microanalyzing, open coding, defining categories, comparative analyzing, theoretical sampling, and concept mapping.[7] I have combined both sociologically created codes and in vivo codes—codes that capture the actual language used by participants (Coffey and Atkinson 1996:32). The concept mapping process required me to clarify relationships among concepts, both pre-existing concepts, like "feminist consciousness," and those that emerged through analysis, such as "rap groups." The map formed a basis for the written text and can facilitate the reader's understanding of the findings.

<div align="center">Research Design</div>

Entry into the Field

Entry into the field began through my explicit dual roles as a new member of one of NOW's midwestern chapters and as a graduate student conducting thesis research. This research project began during a spring 2002 seminar in advanced qualitative research methods, taught by Dr. Barbara S. Heyl. The course required each student to design and execute an ethnographic research project: I chose to interview three members

of the NOW chapter that I had recently joined. Previous coursework already had me thinking about my own feminist beliefs and reading about the notion of social capital. In fact, as a requirement for another course, I had already written a thesis proposal approaching these topics quantitatively. During the spring 2002 semester, I had the opportunity in another seminar course, taught by Dr. Maura Toro-Morn, to draft the qualitative proposal approved for this project. Due to a variety of factors, including a full-time professional practice position that began in August 2002 and ended in July 2003, my work on this project has been sporadic. I conducted additional interviews in February and April 2003.

In some ways, I have been "in the field" continuously since the spring 2002 semester: I have been tracking the activities of the NOW chapter, taking part where opportunities present themselves, and noting media coverage of NOW at the national, state, and local level. Locally, I have heard the same stories repeated in different contexts, which strengthens the validity of what I am reporting. Although I have not yet reached the point of theoretical saturation, the amount of new material emerging from my last interviews was much less than emerged from the first. Once my thesis draft neared completion, I exited the field by sharing my findings, in the form of the concept map, with participants. I will maintain my ties to the organization.

Ethical Considerations

Howard Becker (2000) points out that "doing research is always risky, personally, emotionally, ideologically, and politically, just because we never know for sure what results our work will have" (p. 253). Despite the uncertainty, researchers have an

obligation to protect their participants and to try to anticipate consequences. Working as I have among participants who know each other, and in some cases very well, makes confidentiality in reporting a concern. While a participant and her words may not be recognizable to the majority of readers of this text, they may be recognizable to another member of the NOW chapter. For that reason, I sought approval from each participant for any significant quotations in this text.[8] More importantly, I have been mindful of potential harm to participants when deciding what information to include and how to present it. As close as some of the participants are, my concern for confidentiality may seem excessive to them, for example when I avoid naming whom I have or have not interviewed, even though they know this from their own conversations with each other.

An additional special concern for this project is my dual status as both a researcher and a participant in the organization to which these feminists do belong or have belonged. Although I am an active member, this NOW chapter does not have regular meetings. For example, since January 2003, I have attended perhaps three meetings and one event. Moreover, my interest in the organization is genuine—I joined the organization before starting this research project—and I believe that I would be involved right now even if I had decided not to interview these women. If anything, this project has deepened my commitment, out of respect for the work that these women have done over the years. To the best of my knowledge, participants have been comfortable seeing me at meetings after our interviews. There has been very little discussion of my work in these settings.

The research protocol for this thesis project received Institutional Review Board approval through March 2003; that approval was extended through March 2004. (Approval letters are in Appendix A.) I provided an informed consent form to interviewees prior to the start of interviews. This form described the aspects of participation, including its voluntary nature and the fact that participation can be terminated for any reason and at any time, with no penalties. Participant pseudonyms are the only identifying information on my notes and/or the audiotapes. I made every effort to avoid accumulations of detail that might be identifiable. I have stored all audiotapes and handwritten notes in a locked box in my place of residence, which is protected by a security system. Typed notes, which were password protected and on my computer's hard drive for the duration of the project, have been identified with pseudonyms only.

No physical risks to participants were apparent. Social risks were similarly not apparent, since participants are comfortable enough with their feminist identities to belong or have belonged to a feminist organization. Additionally, I have made every effort to maintain confidentiality. Psychological risks were also minimal, meaning that the chance and degree of discomfort or harm in this project was not greater than what is ordinarily experienced in daily life. Psychological risks were limited to any negative feelings that might emerge from discussing participants' beliefs, past events, or current situations. Note, however, that most of the women I interviewed have been involved in their organization since the 1970s, and the rest were suggested to me by members. The atmosphere of the organization is supportive, and generally its members discuss past personal difficulties without noticeable stress.

Sampling

The sample for this project was initially purposive, beginning with interested members of the NOW chapter to which I belong. The chapter has approximately 60 dues-paying members.[9] I began with three women who have been involved with the organization since the 1970s. I chose these members based on my prior (albeit brief) contact with them, their long-term commitment to the organization, and their willingness to self-disclose to me, a new acquaintance. All three are to the best of my knowledge White, middle-class or higher, heterosexual, and lacking conspicuous physical disabilities. Through the gate-keeping power of these three members and my own involvement, I had planned to seek three additional participants. Six information-rich cases seemed to be a reasonable number in light of my available time, resources, and skills, especially because I was committed to transcribing my interviews in detail.[10]

As Michael Quinn Patton (2002) points out, qualitative "design should be understood to be flexible and emergent" (p. 246). As a result of theoretical sampling, the total pool was in fact only five participants—my analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that I could sufficiently answer the research questions at that point. I limited my sample to women, despite the fact that both men and women may embrace an explicit or implicit feminist viewpoint, and certainly both have a stake in their communities. One participant estimated that men are at most 17 to 25 percent of the chapter's current members, with only a couple holding office since the chapter's inception. Except for the spouse of one of the women I interviewed, I have not met any of these men. Four of the five women are or have been officers of the local NOW chapter; three are currently active

members. Clearly, these characteristics have shaped my findings—the relationships that these women share and their commitment to activism should not be taken as typical of the other members of this NOW chapter, let alone of other feminists. For example, feminism is still important to these women and their understanding of the world around them, a perspective that may not be shared by those who were members of the chapter only briefly and/or who have minimally contributed to its activities.

Participant Profiles[11]

At the close of each initial interview, I asked participants to provide pseudonyms for this text. Chapter IV includes much more detail about each of these women's histories and perspectives; what follows is basic demographic and background information.[12] My first interview was with Maggie Jones, a 75-year-old mother who has been a homemaker since she married. Maggie raised six of her own children and took care of many others. She and her husband recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Maggie is German-Irish and was raised in the Catholic church. An older sister to six brothers, she did not attend college. But she clearly believes that "everybody needs to learn as they go along."

The next day, I met with Wilma Smith, a 59-year-old medical doctor, who is also married with children. She joked that medical school is just vocational or trade school. Like Maggie, she is White and was raised in the Catholic church. Both Maggie and Wilma were born in the same city where they live today.

I later spoke with Dessa Brown, a semi-retired, 70-year-old registered nurse. Like the other women, she is White, a wife, and a mother. Dessa has three children, and her

only remaining sibling lives far away. She was raised in a fundamentalist religion but now describes herself as a "humanist." It does not bother her to be called a "radical feminist."

All three women have been involved with NOW since the 1970s, and all continue to be active in the community. Theoretical sampling requires the researcher to seek "places, people, or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts" (Strauss and Corbin 1998:201). Therefore, I wished to speak with someone involved in the beginning of the chapter who is not currently active. I interviewed Agnes Calvert, a 66-year-old midwesterner who grew up in the Presbyterian church. She has a master's degree and is now retired from teaching elementary school. Agnes is divorced and has two daughters and a grandson, whom she is helping to raise. She describes herself as "a very strong personality."

I also wanted to speak with an African-American woman who had been involved with NOW. I interviewed Helen Dean, a 53-year-old social worker. She has a master's degree and directs programs that benefit low-income children and families. Helen was born in a large midwestern city and now is married with four children. She describes herself as "a work in progress." Through these five women come the multiple perspectives that strengthen and enrich our understanding of feminist consciousness and social capital in a mid-sized midwestern city.

Interview Process

My initial intention was that each participant take part in two qualitative interview sessions—an initial hour-long session and one or more follow-up sessions that would

total a second hour. Maggie had an initial hour-and-twenty-minute interview, with a fifty-minute second interview. Wilma met with me for almost one hour initially and then had a half-hour follow-up interview. Dessa took part in one qualitative interview session lasting approximately one hour. All three of these interviews took place during the 2002 spring semester. My interviews with Agnes and Helen took place during the 2003 spring semester. Agnes and I met once for over two hours. With Helen, I had an initial hour-long interview and a cursory follow-up session over the phone. Total interviewing time was over seven and a half hours, plus nearly two hours spent discussing findings and quotations. Participants chose the interview meeting times and locations. I interviewed Maggie and Dessa in a quiet booth at a local diner, while Wilma and I sat at her kitchen table and in her living room. I talked with Agnes in her living room and Helen in her office.

Our guided conversations traced the origins of these women's feminist philosophies and revealed how they believe feminism has shaped their relationships—their ties to friends, neighbors, coworkers, and others. The list of interview questions has evolved during my time in the field; the final version is included in Appendix B. This list of questions was not prescriptive—I focused on what the participants wanted to share. As Kvale (1996) emphasizes, "The qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge" (p. 14). In a sense, the interviews were the result of a collaborative process between each participant and myself. I asked follow-up questions, attempting to capture as much complexity as I could. Because different participants talked about the same events and each other, their corroboration lends additional credibility to these findings. I

was exceedingly fortunate in having five reflective and articulate participants. In other words, my simple list of questions elicited a wealth of information. And the process was hopefully beneficial on both sides. Near the end of one interview, Maggie exclaimed, "Well, this has been really stimulating!"

Transcription and Coding

With the informed consent of the participants, I both took notes and created audiotapes. Immediately after each interview, I went back through my notes to fill in details still fresh in my mind that had not been captured on paper. I later used both these notes and the audiotapes to type detailed transcripts of the interviews, which I then proofread and, where necessary, sanitized. The process was quite time-consuming. For example, the initial hour-and-twenty-minute interview with Maggie took over fourteen hours to prepare, from review of my notes through typing them up. After two interviews with Maggie and one with Wilma, I borrowed a transcriber, which sped my work by a couple of hours. With wide margins for making handwritten notes, there are a total of 190 pages of typed fieldnotes, excluding any notes from the quotation-checking sessions.[13]

Analysis of these dense transcripts began during the spring 2002 research seminar. I used open coding—I was both open to concepts that might emerge from the interviews and looking for indications of social capital. I wrote codes and notes in pencil in the margins of the transcripts, using line-by-line microanalysis for the first 25 pages but then coding paragraph-by-paragraph. Due to the structure of the class, I also had the benefit of other students and Dr. Heyl reviewing my fieldnotes. I arranged the codes that

resulted from this process in a concept map, at first on paper and then using a software application called Inspiration. When I returned to these transcripts after my thesis proposal hearing, I decided that I needed a more methodical approach to coding and an efficient way to handle the many pages of transcripts.

Qualitative data analysis software packages being prohibitively expensive, I decided to develop a Microsoft Access database to manage the data. Having no experience with Access, I attended 12 hours of training conducted by Dr. Gerry Chrisman. He was intrigued by my project and met with my twice to design the database. One challenge was importing the transcripts from Microsoft Word. First, I broke up long paragraphs. For each interview, I set up a separate question table (containing the actual question text, as it was asked, the actual question number, and the participant number) and a response table (containing the response text, the question number, the participant number, and a paragraph number). I copied the Word tables into Microsoft Excel tables and then imported them into Access as new dummy tables. Finally, I moved the data from the dummy tables into actual question and response tables.

Once all of the interview transcripts were arranged in Access tables, I began again to open code. For each paragraph, I assigned one or more codes around such issues as:

1. Definitions and descriptions of feminism;

2. Factors that contributed to the development of feminist consciousness and involvement in the women's movement;

3. Evolution of social networks, both informal and formal, and potential connections to feminist ideology;

4. Demographic information and other indications of social location;

5. Indications of bonding and bridging social capital in the local community context; and

6. Other patterns that emerged, such as methods of reflective engagement, the challenges of grassroots activism, and the strategies for overcoming those challenges.

One by one, I worked my way through the 1,519 paragraphs in the database. The coding form in the database allowed me to move forward and backward in the text, to see what was said immediately before and after each paragraph. As I worked, I organized specific codes into broader categories, such as "family dynamics." I also revised and elaborated my initial concept map to graphically depict the relationships among the codes. Upon completion of each participant's transcripts, I reviewed the list of codes up to that point, collapsing similar codes, moving codes from one category to another (e.g., from "recreation" to "activism"), and/or renaming them to be more descriptive (e.g., "sex segregation in workplace"). There are over 350 codes; some are concepts and some simply track references to organizations, individuals, and events. Throughout the analytic process, from coding to mapping to writing, I have constantly checked the original transcripts. What did participants say? My analysis rests firmly on the answer to that question. Chapters IV and V contain the results of this analytic process.

Endnotes

[1] Regarding the collaborative process, DeVault (1999:67) specifically refers to woman-to-woman interviews. She does not address whether or not interviews involving men in either or both roles could also be cooperative in this way, but she does note that this kind of understanding "is certainly not guaranteed in any woman-to-woman interaction" (DeVault 1999:72).

[2] If this statement sounds qualified, it is out of recognition of the significant time and/or cost required for detailed transcription. DeVault (1999) does not address this point in sufficient detail.

[3] I prefer to use a tape recorder because I know from previous work how difficult it is to maintain connection to another speaker while frantically scribbling away. With notes alone, idiosyncratic bits of speech are lost and/or refined in my attempts to get down the most important points.

[4] Hall (1986:53) credits the development of the articulation theory to Ernesto Laclau. While this theory may be popular in the field of cultural studies, Hall (1986) himself disparages theory fashions, the "wear[ing of] new theories like tee-shirts" (p. 59). Hall (1993) also argues, "The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency" (p. 540). I certainly do not claim such fluency in Hall's articulation theory; rather, it has provided an excellent way of thinking about connections and context.

[5] To avoid the reduction of complicated social reality to mere socio-economic factors is an admirable goal indeed, one that I have tried to meet in this thesis—not always successfully.

[6] This informant, like many that Moffitt (1993b:51-52) interviewed, in fact held contradictory images of State Farm: he also gave a positive assessment based on friends' excellent job benefits (including flextime), his own experience coaching kids' sports with State Farm employees, and the sense that State Farm is as philanthropic as another large company. Moffitt (1993b) concludes that image is "plural, ever-changing, and determined by organizational, social, and personal experiences" (p. 55).

[7] For illustrative examples of concept maps, see Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (1994).

[8] I sought approval from each participant for her participant profile, all *long* quotations from her interviews, and any potentially *sensitive* quotations or information (for example, about her family, her church, or other people in the community).

[9] This figure does not include any local at-large members—those who have joined national NOW but have not affiliated with the local chapter.

[10] Kvale (1996:102) notes that current interview projects tend to use from 5 to 25 participants.

[11] Readers may or may not feel that similar information about the researcher is relevant. I am a 31-year-old married White woman who grew up on the East Coast and was raised in the United Church of Christ. I am a Peace Corps Fellow completing a master's degree in

sociology with a sequence in applied community and economic development. I also have a master's degree in English.

[12] Each age given here is the age at the time of that person's interviews.

[13] My fieldnotes have margins as follows: one and a half inches on the left, two and half inches on the right, and less than an inch top and bottom. They are single spaced, with double spacing between paragraphs.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS: ACTIVIST STORIES

The concept map in Appendix C is a graphic representation of the themes and

patterns that emerged through the coding process. (Please note that the emphasis will be

on the lower portion of the map.) The interviews included rich detail about what

feminism means, how feminist consciousness grows, how it affects families, and the

challenges and strategies of actively seeking feminist goals. Although I will address

these topics, the focus here will be on some of the bonds, breaks, and bridges created

through grassroots activism. As noted in Chapter I, bonding social capital is "exclusive,"

"inward looking," and homogenizing, while bridging social capital is "inclusive" and

"outward looking" (Putnam 2000:2). In coding and writing about bonds or bridges here,

I have attended to these definitions and the way that the women talked about their

relationships.[1] Chapter V draws on the following material to discuss feminism as a force

for bonding and bridging social capital and to answer the other three research questions.

Growth of Feminist Consciousness

Each of the women described some of the factors that shaped the growth of her

feminist consciousness. Maggie and Helen came into the women's movement through

their involvement in the civil rights movement. Wilma mentioned the writings of Betty

Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir. Dessa identified the defeat of the ERA as a turning point; Agnes had a strong interest in abortion rights. Helen also talked about the glass ceiling that she experienced in her profession, particularly as a Black woman.

While one or two of the women mentioned media stereotypes, political issues, early educational experiences, and workplace discrimination, family members played an important role in all five cases. Two women, for example, described their mothers as women with the strength to resist (but not to disregard altogether) social expectations. Wilma's parents encouraged her to become a doctor and to do "something besides the usual marriage and family." Maggie was also strongly influenced by the feminism of one of her daughters, while Agnes recalled hearing about the ERA for the first time from her sister. Not all of the family influences were positive, however. One of the women identified her father's abuse of her mother as shaping her views about women's independence.

Like family and workplace experiences, religion emerged as an influential theme. Maggie and Wilma both grew up in the Catholic faith and have struggled with the tension between feminism and Catholicism as it was practiced in the local diocese. From Wilma's memories of the sexist jokes that she heard in Catholic school, to Maggie's realization that her priest did not respect her, both women described their religious histories through the lens of feminist consciousness. Dessa grew up in a fundamentalist church that limited her social contacts and almost kept her from becoming a nurse. As discussed below, four of the women described a current spiritual state much different

from the faith that they had been raised in, and they linked this change to their emerging

feminist consciousness and activism. Maggie explained:

> If you're brought up in a traditional religion, you get basic human rights attitudes, and I always felt later on—different friends and I have got involved in all this stuff and realized we weren't doing what the local church leaders, well it's their problem. We're taught to believe in these things, and it's too bad if they don't want us to live it.

Of course, despite the common themes in family and religious experiences, each woman

has her own story about how she became involved with feminism and what feminism

means to her. And for Maggie, that individual experience, "becoming your own

touchstone," is the most important thing: "That's the biggest attainment you have, when

you realize you're finally finding your own voice."

The Wheel of Oppression

All of the women view feminism as linked to broader social concerns. Maggie,

for example, sees the women's movement as "important . . . to all of society, to any

changes we want to make in every way." She described the related social problems that

need changing as the "wheel of oppression." In fact, one of her favorite workshop

exercises is a circle formation in which different kinds of oppression are named, and

those who feel that they have suffered in this way step into the middle of the circle. The

point of this exercise is that "all of us at one time or another were really either in the

oppressor row or in the oppressed row." Maggie is herself very open about her struggle

to overcome the racist and antisemitic attitudes that she learned as a child. Dessa

likewise admitted that if lesbianism had been more overt when she first became involved

with NOW, she "might've backed out at that point in time." She added, "You grow into the realization of what's right."

Dessa, then, like the other four women, sees feminist consciousness as growth, as "all that you've learned through the years." Wilma added that feminism is "an ongoing process: think[ing], experience, discussion." A significant part of this process is learning to recognize and combat oppression in its many forms. In our conversations, Maggie emphasized the institutional nature of sexism, racism, and homophobia: "So it isn't, it was never individual people that were the problem, it was the institutions, and that's what you have to go on dismantling."[2] Helen articulated a similar "system standpoint" (her words). Still, Maggie pointed to the many ways that individuals perpetuate prejudice, for example through "jokes" and violence. The combined power of institutions and individuals means that change does not come quickly, as Maggie explained:

> And it's so hard to get over that, that we never, ever will unlearn—my generation especially—everything we ever learned, just like men will unlearn their sexism. It would take their whole life, no matter how we try. Because it was so institutionalized. Because it's everywhere, reinforced everywhere.

But the battle must be fought. Maggie asserted, "So you're always dealing with all these things we've learned, and that are institutionalized, that doesn't mean you don't work on some cause that is absolutely necessary and needed." Similarly, Helen explained: "You realize . . . that just being defensive isn't the answer. You have to be proactive and an activist."

While all of the women linked sexism to other issues like racism and homophobia, Maggie explicitly asserted feminism's primacy in the battle to end oppression:

> Basically feminism and sexism, of all of them, is the one that's most important to bring peace and equilibrity, equity into the, into the world, because every race is half women. . . . A race, a religion, whether it's Jewish religion, Catholic religion, Black, White, Latino, you can discriminate against them because of their religious thing or their race, but each one of them can turn around and take their ire out on the women in their group.

Whether or not feminism is more important than other movements for social change (and this is an assertion that feminists debate), all of the women see the push for equality as central in their lives. Interestingly, in spite of the liberal feminist characterization of NOW, Maggie, Wilma, and Dessa—the three women currently active with NOW—see radical feminism as essential.[3] Wilma noted, "I think that we have to have radical feminism. All the rest is Band-Aids. And that's why it's hard to be a radical feminist because nobody wants to listen to the really hard questions." Dessa explained that you have "to push the edge of the envelope to get somewhere."

Despite, as Maggie said, "being stereotyped and misunderstood, demonized" as a feminist, and in spite of her own initial fear of feminists, feminism is a core part of who she is. Likewise, when asked what feminism means to her, Dessa replied:

> You know, you can give the usual: pay, equal pay, you know, for equal work, the ERA amendment. It means pro-Choice. But it means so much more than that that I think people don't realize that it's just—it cuts across the board of your whole life, everything you *do*, everything you *are*. . . . And people may laugh about "consciousness-raising," but that's exactly what it is because you weren't even conscious of the fact that you could have been anything else or done anything else until somebody clues you in there. So I know it's kind of a word people laugh at anymore but, it *worked*.

Feminism changed the way that these women see the world and their place in it. Its transformative effect on their consciousness shaped their relationships—with family members, with colleagues, with friends, with fellow activists, and with the wider community.

Family Dynamics

Family dynamics contributed to the development of feminist consciousness for these five women, and that consciousness in turn affected their family relationships. In some cases, relationships remained strong or became stronger. For example, the daughter who introduced Maggie to feminism is also a great source of pride for Maggie and her husband. The same mutual admiration and respect is also apparent in their relationship with one of their politically like-minded sons. And Maggie's husband himself is very supportive of her feminist activism. Wilma reported, "My family has done OK with me being a feminist." She described good relations with the younger generation of women in her family. Dessa does not feel that her feminism changed her relationships in her immediate family. She has a close relationship with her daughter, and she is a role model for her niece, who would like to be just like her at age 70. Agnes described good family relationships, even with her Republican siblings, and she also sees herself passing her feminist perspective on to her daughters and grandson.

Sometimes family members are not interested in sharing that perspective. Even though Wilma did not change her name when she married, her own parents and siblings

address her with her husband's last name. She does not see this as something to "wage a huge battle" over with family—it is "no big deal." Dessa simply does not talk about her feminism much with her extended family, and so they get along fine. Her sister-in-law says that Dessa is wonderful although she does not understand Dessa. "I don't preach at them," Dessa explained.

For Maggie's family relationships, the cost of her feminist consciousness has been high, including one conservative Christian son cutting off contact: "We've lost out on seeing his children as they grew up." Much of Maggie's extended family is "traditional Catholic far right," but there are covert supporters: "one person here and one person there in the family who cheers you on and, you know, and tells you when nobody's looking." Some of these covert supporters are in the younger generation, nieces and nephews, which has created some unspoken resentment in their parents. They even blame Maggie and her husband for their kids "going wrong." Maggie added, "You know, as we get older, we're trying to keep it [that resentment] from dividing us." And the one son who had ended contact is putting out "feelers" to reconnect.

Reflective Engagement

All five women described their approaches to activism—the tools, the challenges, and the strategies for overcoming them. Communication is obviously key. Agnes talked about simply speaking up: "You have to speak up, because you never know, you might be a catalyst for other people nearby who feel similarly." At the same time, Helen expressed some impatience with talking, preferring instead to *do* something. She

emphasized collaboration in her activities: "And, and so, the strength in being effective is developing, having the same value systems, that's developing collaboration from the same values and mission. And, and coming together as a unified effort as opposed to thinking, 'We can do it all by ourself.'" All of the women have worked through organizations, as members and/or officers.

Writing letters (e.g., to editors and politicians) and making phone calls (e.g., to talk-radio hosts and activists) are important methods of engagement, particularly for Maggie and Dessa. Maggie talked about the importance of writing succinctly. Both Maggie and Dessa also read a lot, and Maggie has an amazing mind for quotations. Dessa has also worked on political campaigns—one summer, she walked in "about 12 parades." All of the women have been involved in demonstrations. Both Agnes and Helen feel that their jobs have been important means of engagement, with Agnes sharing her egalitarian views when she was in the classroom, and Helen advocating for and empowering the women and families she serves. Helen added: "If you're going to be active, if you're going to be an activist, then you, then you need to find your niche and find out, determine and learn what you can contribute and are good at. And be OK with that."

Tactics, challenges, and strategies clearly varied according to each activist's situation. For example, one woman talked about a lack of material resources as a challenge, while Agnes's material resources helped her fulfill her wish to avoid becoming NOW president (by paying the dues for a likely president). Self-agitation, reminding oneself of the work that needs to be done, is a key way that Maggie keeps going but a

burden to Dessa. Dessa explained, "You always see one other little thing you could do, and it's so time-consuming, and one other little way I can maybe make this work." Dessa talked about poor media coverage of events, while Maggie explained that she does not do some interviews anymore, in order to avoid having her message distorted. Evidently, one activist's challenge is another activist's way of coping.

Responses from others to these women's activist efforts range from affirmation to intimidation to nothing at all, for example when there is no media coverage of an event. Agnes has experienced hate mail, harassing phone calls, and death threats as a result of her pro-Choice activism. All of the women talked about the ridicule and misrepresentation of feminist activists, themselves included. Dessa described letters to the editor that stereotype NOW members:

> And especially when they start in about, how, that women in NOW don't, you know, don't even want you to be a homemaker or have, have children. You know, well then I have to write and say that I have, I am a mother of three children, and I think I've been a good homemaker as far as that goes, but we were one of the first people that stood up for homemakers' rights and I, I have my little file over here you know, and I get out my Homemakers' Bill of Rights and what NOW's done for homemakers, and I let them have it.

But these activists also receive encouragement, as Maggie describes: "You hear from people that they liked the letter you wrote, or they come to something because they saw it in the paper, or somebody writes a letter that never wrote one before." She explains, knowing "that there are people out there that understand" and recognizing successes provide inspiration to keep going.

To do that, to persist and to cope with the challenges, obviously requires a great deal of energy, in addition to creativity, skills, time, and material resources. Just staying

on top of current events, let alone responding to them, presents a considerable challenge.
And sometimes the burden of the effort can repeatedly fall to the same person. Most of
the women talked about the need to compartmentalize their lives and to be selective in
their participation. Helen explained:

> You know, there'll be different phases and so forth, and I think later on in your
> life you just find you're more at peace with it all. That, that energy is channeled
> toward doing something positive. At least, I think for most people that have a
> strong feminist belief system. And they, you know, become activists in their own
> ways.

Each of these women *is* an activist in her own way, and the relationships that they share
with each other and with other activists in the community form a web of support that each
can rely on in her work.

Grassroots Activism: Bonds

Agnes was actually a founding member and the first secretary of the local NOW
chapter. Already an abortion rights activist, Agnes and a friend joined 10 other women at
an over-air-conditioned YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) facility to
launch the organization. She described the strong bonds that formed through the NOW
rap groups. The rap groups began in the early 1970s and met every couple of weeks;
each group did not accept new members once formed. Agnes's rap group helped one of
its members through a divorce: "When somebody was, somebody else was hurting, we
were bleeding." Twenty-five years after Agnes's group formed, she and another member
traveled to the funeral of a man they had never met—the husband of one of the rap group
members. When Agnes retired from teaching, she also retired from activism, having

"saved the world," she joked. Although not an active member of NOW, Agnes hosted an

informal breakfast for members in March 2003, in celebration of an award given to the

chapter.

Likewise, Helen is not currently involved with NOW. Her job keeps her very

busy, and so she feels that her "work networks are stronger" than her personal networks,

although she sees "a lot of intertwining there." Helen explains shifts in her

organizational affiliations over the years as the result of "life changes": having different

needs at each stage of life. Noting that "it wasn't until later in my life that I felt a need to

have that kind of a relationship with, with a woman's organization or a Black sorority,"

Helen joined such a sorority about five years ago. Although primarily a social

organization, the sorority does a lot of community projects, and Helen really values the

"network" of relationships that the sorority has provided. She also has another informal

network to draw on:

> There's a group of us in [midwestern city] that kind of grew up in what we call,
> well, we were part of the sixties and so forth. And I don't, I don't know how to
> explain it. We just have this understanding. And we do, we do stay in contact,
> but it's a very informal kind of a, a network. If there was, if there's a need for,
> oh, how to describe it? Like just recently, we had the elections and so forth, you
> know, then there's this core group of us that, you know . . . get out and help with
> the campaigns, get people to vote, voter registration drives and things like that.
> And so, you know, there's no *name* for this, but, but there's just this
> understanding that, you know, we're there. And we do, we do support each
> other's causes.

Similarly, active in NOW during its anti-racism workshops in the 1980s, Helen said that

she still knows a lot of the women that were members then. She added: "If they, if they

had a cause or something that I felt very strongly about, I would not hesitate to support, support the group."

Maggie, Wilma, and Dessa all described the positive bonds that they formed with other feminists as they came into the movement. Already active around civil rights issues, Maggie belonged to both Catholics Act for ERA and Housewives for ERA prior to joining NOW. It was not until well *after* joining NOW that she changed her stand on abortion, which caused some tension with Catholic friends: "My name showed up in an ad for Choice, and I didn't think it was going to, I thought I'd just sent in the money for it, and I got these kind of calls from Catholics, 'Oh my God! You did this?'" Maggie described being invited to join NOW in 1977 and then to be its president in 1980. But other NOW members did not push her to take a stand on abortion: "And I had, I made, they knew that if I was president of [midwestern city] NOW, I was not going to talk about abortion. I hadn't, I was still really trying to deal with that, with what it meant. So, I was never expected to, and I never did." The NOW members valued Maggie's leadership skills and respected her then pro-Life position on abortion. Maggie later made the transition to pro-Choice politics, but she was supported by NOW members regardless of her position.

Dessa also found support in the local NOW chapter. Noting that feminism changed her social networks, Dessa said that Maggie, whom she met through NOW, is probably her best friend, despite how busy they both are. Dessa described attending her first NOW meeting (about failure to pass the ERA) and being "just amazed at those women." She found "a lifeboat" in Maggie Jones. Maggie had noted in our interviews

that both she and Dessa write a lot of letters, and Dessa joked that Maggie keeps her really busy. Dessa spoke of her great admiration for Maggie as "a dynamo," and Maggie called Dessa "a hero." Describing Maggie's organization of the annual Women's Equality Day event, Dessa said, "I mean we try to help when we can . . . at the last minute we jump in and try and help her." Despite significant family demands, nursing, and her own leadership role in the local American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) chapter, Dessa retains her commitment to the feminist women in her circle. For example, she mentioned an International Women's Day event, organized by the founder of a local feminist multicultural organization, that she hoped to attend: "I'd like to, to support [name] because she's tried so hard to get that off the ground."

It is that kind of active support that attracted Wilma to feminism. Like Dessa, Wilma's membership in NOW was a real turning point for her, "a quantum leap." She noted that: "The NOW chapter at one point had a book club, rap groups or consciousness-raising groups I think they're called now. That was part of my growth, that's for sure." Although co-president of the NOW chapter, Wilma described herself as "not a great meeting person." She also pointed out that she does not attend many medical conventions. While this self-characterization and nonattendance may have negative repercussions for her professional networks, feminist gatherings appear to be quite a different matter for Wilma:

> But I always, always find going to conven-, to NOW conventions, and I've gone to state conventions, not national conventions, tremendously energizing—new ideas, new people, well affirmation of what you're doing to some extent. But just, you know, a tremendous educational and social experience.

These opportunities to meet with other feminists clearly matter to Wilma. Not surprisingly, then, Wilma was writing letters and picketing with Catholics Act for ERA alongside of Maggie. Even though Wilma embraced feminism before Maggie did, she admires Maggie for "always bringing up the hard questions." Wilma described another friendship through NOW as having evolved much more slowly. Citing religious differences, Wilma said, "It's taken a while, but it's not that we had no common ground because she's a feminist, but common ground outside of feminist things, it takes a while to develop that." Once developed, though, the relationship has endured.

Agnes recalled a visit by Betty Friedan, who was "blown away that there were this many of us in [midwestern city] NOW." Significant in terms of social capital, both Maggie and Dessa described changes in the NOW chapter since those early days. Dessa noted that the group used to have 10 to 20 people attending the monthly meetings when she first joined, but now there is just a newsletter.[4] Maggie sees the decline in meeting attendance as common to many local progressive organizations, and she explained that this decrease is partly due to the achievements of feminists, although often unacknowledged: "The women's movement has had a little bit of a success, so women have more options, which means the activism that was there in the seventies, that everybody would love to see again, it only happens if there's some big emergency."

Still, the connections have lasted. Wilma asserted, "So, I've met a lot of people who I don't necessarily *see* anymore at NOW meetings since there aren't very many, but who I do, if I have question, I could consult." Agnes agreed: "I made friends that I'm still friends with today. I learned so much. I *grew* so much." Although the NOW

chapter no longer meets every month and actually considered disbanding at the December 2001 meeting, the relationships described by these women continue to endure and to provide a source of support for them as individuals and for their community work.

Grassroots Activism: Breaks

As these women have grown as feminists and gained the support of their NOW friends, they have also lost other kinds of support. As discussed above, early religious experiences shaped the growth of feminist consciousness for Wilma, Maggie, and Dessa. The strengthening of that consciousness resulted in ruptures with religious organizations for these three women and for Agnes.[5] Agnes praised the Presbyterian church for deciding to ordain women as ministers and elders but added, "I found out that that was on paper, and it was seldom practiced, and I didn't want our daughters raised to believe that they were inferior, and my ex-husband felt the same." Both sides of the family had had men in the clergy, which made leaving the church "exceedingly difficult." Although Presbyterianism "had always been a central focus" of Agnes's life, she is now an agnostic and does not want anything to do with the church: "My, my opinion about church, about the body of Christ, denominations from one end to the next, has certainly changed."

Maggie told a similar story. She explained, "I had to break with the local religious establishment that I was so much a part of." Prior to becoming a feminist, she had been an active church member, involved in preparing young Catholic couples for marriage and writing pro-Life letters with her priest. When she became openly pro-Choice, the priest, whom she had known and visited since high school, wrote her a letter

"about how bad he felt that I let myself be brainwashed by my NOW friends." This response was "a blow" but also "a lesson" that changed Maggie's relationship to her church. Although for a time active in a Unitarian Universalist congregation, she is now "totally uninvolved with established religion" because she does not like much of what she sees going on.

When I opened my second interview with Wilma with a question about additional thoughts since our first conversation, she was anxious to talk about how her relationship to her church has changed as she has gotten older and her feminist consciousness has grown. She said, "My most recent parish priest has some preconceived notions of what I believe in and has been walking around threatening to excommunicate me." Despite being distressed by this experience, Wilma noted, "Well, a lot of people in the congregation don't know about this, but other, like-minded friends from the community who are and are not in the congregation have been particularly supportive, you know." In addition to this conflict with the priest, Wilma has not found the kind of nurturance that she is seeking in the church's Catholic women's club:

> I've been to about one meeting in my life. They're very much on the level of, "All right, who's going to handle the bazaar? Who's going to handle the games?" And I'm glad to bring cake, I'm glad to help serve, but you know it doesn't take you to any depth of discussion, there's no personal growth there at all.

She nevertheless enjoyed singing in the church choir at one point. She joked, "I like to sing, and that's the one place where they can't stop you." Still, she explained, "It's not to be construed as, that I am a, totally subscribing to the tenets of a religion, especially one that puts them out in chapter and verse, and you read and respond."

Dessa was already in the process of leaving her fundamentalist church when her feminist consciousness began to grow. She described how the church discouraged her social contacts growing up: "We were not *supposed* to make friends of the world." About her break with the church, she noted, "I have a few lasting friends from there, but I'm not sure they understand where I'm coming from." Dessa also said that she has not tried to make contacts in her village, which is a short distance from the city where the NOW and ACLU chapters meet. She described her network of friends as "very definitely" having changed since she became a feminist: "The only people I'm acquainted with in this town is the, you might say liberal community."

And even in the liberal community, there can be fissures. Maggie explained that during her tenure on the ACLU board she became "disillusioned but then realistic about the fact that just because . . . people are involved in progressive movements and are considered—and I hate the terms 'liberal' and 'conservative'—liberal, liberal, the males can still be pretty darn sexist." More moderate organizations can also present challenges. Agnes left the League of Women Voters when the local group decided that abortion legislation was too controversial to study. Of that departure, Agnes said, "I need a group membership that focuses my energy a little tighter. So that had an effect in my networking."

These women experienced other kinds of ruptures over their feminist beliefs. Although Wilma belongs to the American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) and another organization for women in her specialty, she is active in neither. She described the AMWA as "not terribly feminist" and slow to move on issues like domestic violence.

Wilma spoke with much greater enthusiasm about a professional organization she belonged to during her residency: the Medical Committee for Human Rights, an organization that worked to end racial and economic discrimination in health care during the 1960s. She has also traveled to the West Indies to serve those in need. Wilma's activism and egalitarian ethic have arguably caused her to miss opportunities to network with professionals through the more mainstream medical organizations.

When Agnes was on the board of the state education association, also a mainstream organization, she thwarted its president's wish to unanimously endorse a gubernatorial candidate because that candidate had "shafted us on [the] ERA." She went to the microphone to speak her mind, and she and five others voted against the endorsement. In fact, when asked about working with others locally to solve problems, Agnes replied, "I must say that I would rather free-lance than to be bound by an organization, because organizations have policies or beliefs they arrive at by consensus." Agnes is very comfortable expressing her own opinion publicly, for example by speaking at a city council meeting or writing a letter to the editor, even when the response is ridicule. She added, "I would much rather free-lance, because I can handle the abuse." While Agnes's approach is bold and in line with her convictions, it may at times have caused her to miss out on the mutual support and important lessons that can come from collaboration.

Despite leadership skills and roles in various organizations, including NOW, Agnes intentionally avoided the office of NOW president. She felt that the chapter's first president was a tough act to follow and that the local education association required her

attention: she "couldn't save the world for women and girls and save the world for teachers at the same time." Not surprisingly, competing demands and varied interests caused each of the women to make some connections while foreclosing others. For both Agnes and Helen, engagement in NOW has not remained a priority, despite self-identification as feminists.

Professionally, Helen said that she would not work with some local organizations. She cited one organization that she believes uses its programs for pregnant young women for its own ends and serves a largely Black population with no Black individuals in administrative positions. Helen sees her role as advocating for young women in poverty: "To help *them* develop social networks . . . really drives my whole value system in terms of feminism." To effectively advocate for these women, Helen focuses on collaboration:

> And so creating, constantly creating relationships, nurturing relationships, respecting relationships, you know, men, women. And, that is, in a sense, we do have to continue to advocate for that openness that's necessary to have those kinds of relationships.

If an organization is too concerned about its "turf" to collaborate, or if its practices do not evince equality and "mutual respect," Helen does not waste her time trying to work together.

Little wonder then, that these women report a diminished level of trust in certain institutions. When I asked Wilma how she thought that feminism might have affected her level of trust for public institutions, for example Congress, she replied: "Whoa. Well, when you're, when you're passionately interested in something, whether it's feminism, whether it's civil rights, whether it's economic justice, you realize the whole

damn thing is corrupt." Wilma used the U.S. government's foreign policy in Haiti as a case in point. Dessa expressed a similar sentiment: "I wouldn't trust anything the government tells me. And you can see the spin on things, so, you know, if you're aware of what they're doing to you." She expressed disillusionment over events "behind the scenes that kept it [ERA] from happening," as well as concern "that other people are . . . as easily duped by the process of government and all that, as I was." Helen also indicated distrust over "the way the system and institutions are set up, that, that prohibit, especially the families that I'm working with, to make progress, to achieve their goals and their visions."

While Dessa felt that her feminism definitely affected her feelings about institutions, Wilma attributes her cynicism in part to "growing up" and seeing people's self-interest, which intentionally or unintentionally hurts people "further down the watershed, economic and social." Having paid attention to government activity around the issues that she cares about and finding grounds for distrust, she believes "that it's probably pervasive." She talked specifically about university politics, the church, and revelations of corruption in the Olympic committee and the American Red Cross. Wilma pointed out that "it's hard for any institution to be everything for everybody, but I think that we could do better at all of this."

Agnes and Maggie talked more about distrust of individual politicians and political parties than of government itself. Maggie cautioned, "Don't ever assume that these guys [politicians] are always going to be on your side, that they have the right thing in mind, or your good in mind." Both she and Agnes named politicians who had, as

Agnes put it, "screwed us on [the] ERA." At the same time, Maggie did cite one politician who had "really carried through as far as I know on all our expectations," and another who had followed through on ERA support even though it meant the end of his political career—"there'll be people like that who you can trust." Maggie explained, "You know, politics is so necessary, is a necessary element that is very hard to have to deal with."

Wilma, Agnes, and Helen all talked about having less trust for individuals in general, but they saw that change as more a result of life experiences than of growing feminist consciousness. Wilma noted: "You can't pass from age, you know, 25 to age 59 without growing up. And so I think just experience would make me a little less willing to trust people at face value. I don't know that feminism has a lot to do with it." Agnes concurred, "I don't know that I could put it on feminism's doorstep." Dessa felt that her level of trust in individuals had not diminished, while Helen described her feelings this way: "You become real cautious, because you don't know where people are coming from sometimes. And, but then at the same time, there's a, you take the time to find out, so." A lessening of trust may not mean a complete closure, but rather a more cautious approach.

Grassroots Activism: Bridges

Through membership in NOW, as well as activities around issues like the ERA and abortion rights, these women were able to connect with activists with different priorities and backgrounds. Wilma described these connections:

And then, out of the, out of the association with NOW, you do meet people in all sorts of different groups, even though you don't belong to them. . . . You know, I met people that are in the [peace network] and people in the conservation movement. They're all, has a relationship to one another. You can't be for peace and yet for exploitation.

On a personal level, some of the, I've met some of the most interesting and most diverse people, people with all sorts of interests and passions. It's been on a personal level very enriching. And a lot of these are not close, personal friendships, but they're people who have taught me a great deal about, about what they're into and how it has implications for feminism, and feminism has implications for them and vice versa. . . . It's not just one narrow path—there are all sorts of other people moving on the same, moving toward the same goal. I've felt myself terribly enriched by knowing these people and their issues.

These connections outside of NOW have formed in part through members' individual interests and initiatives and in part through broader projects that have involved the whole chapter.

All five women have been individually active in community organizations that are not explicitly feminist. Wilma described mainly activities related to her children (for example, parent-teacher associations and Scouting) and her profession, while Helen talked about her sorority and her ongoing service on two or three local boards of nonprofit organizations. She also sees her job as feminist activism because she empowers young women and families in poverty: "I basically sought positions that allowed me to do that, to provide the education, the insight into how the system impacts the families that we work with." Agnes described both a number of professional organizations for educators, as well as recreational groups that she has joined since retiring. She also described some successful efforts to influence these organizations. For

example, she suggested that a society for female educators donate money to a women's shelter, and the society proceeded to do so repeatedly.

Dessa and her spouse had been involved in the local peace network but eventually no longer had time for it; Dessa has several family commitments that require much time and energy. Fortunately, Dessa can rely on her friends for support: "You enlarge your area of contacts, and [I have] a very supportive group of contacts." As mentioned above, Dessa is a leading member of the local ACLU chapter. While working on this project, I attended an ACLU open forum on religion in the public square. Dessa and Maggie were two of the three forum organizers, and Dessa introduced several of the speakers.[6] When Dessa and I met for our interview, she told me about follow-up work that needed to be done in light of disappointing media coverage of the forum. Maggie had been rallying Dessa to attend to this work and then helping her to get it done.

Maggie and her spouse, in addition to their work with NOW, the ACLU, and the NAACP, started a chapter of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) three or four years ago. While the group no longer meets regularly, it still has a hotline and a "good mailing list." She sees "a real need" for this organization, and she described to me the support that members provide to one another. One of Maggie's daughters, the one who introduced her to feminism and with whom she has a close relationship, is lesbian. Additionally, in the early 1960s, Maggie and her spouse, then "deeply involved" in the civil rights movement, were instrumental in starting a local anti-racism organization. Both of them feel fortunate in "the kind of friends we have and the kind of people we associate with . . . it's a meeting-of-the-minds kind of thing."

Other members of NOW, in pursuing their individual interests, have broadened the opportunities for cross-issue contact for Maggie, Wilma, and Dessa. One woman has formed a separate feminist multicultural organization. Dessa spoke positively of this organization, and Wilma noted:

> Recently, it's become especially informative to me is the, [name]'s group called [feminist multicultural organization], which are bringing women together across multicultural lines, to use another hackneyed phrase. But I have learned *a lot* about Islam, and that's a hot topic since September [11, 2001]. And just met a lot of interesting women in the few things I've participated in, you know a picnic, an International Women's Day vigil, things like that. I consider that kind of making me grow in experience.

Another woman in NOW, a good friend of Wilma's, works to bring Third World crafts to U.S. markets at fair prices. About this woman, Maggie pointed out:

> Back in her mind, she's always had in her mind that they could rent a place for [an import store] that would eventually be a community center for progressive groups, where you could have meetings and so forth, you could have discussion nights.

And so, the interests of individual NOW members continue to provide opportunities and possibilities for new connections.

As far as the collective bridges built by members of NOW, one lasting example is in this organization's response to domestic violence. Dessa and I talked about how overwhelming the problem is:

> And you really do need to take a small piece at a time, and not try to cure the whole thing. But I mean for them to come up with, "Well, we know there's women out there that need help. What are we gonna do about it?" To come up with a hotline, you know, to me that just was amazing. And look at what it's grown to.

Specifically, the hotline grew into a large anti-violence organization that serves six counties. Dessa noted that this organization has tended to ignore its roots in NOW. She explained, "They don't want to be associated with those radical feminists because they're getting community, they're getting funds from the community now. And of course those funds are important to them, and you understand that."[7] Dessa and other members of NOW support the organization, and she expressed the hope that it would one day acknowledge the connection to NOW. In fact, a year after I interviewed Dessa, the organization gave the local NOW chapter an award that did just that, much to the delight of its members. Wilma pointed out that the NOW chapter began responding to domestic violence in 1973, and all five women emphasized domestic violence as a problem that continues to concern them.

Race relations are also an ongoing concern. Nearly all of the small group of women that I have come into contact with in the local NOW chapter are White. According to Agnes, that was also the case when the organization formed. She remembers one NOW meeting attended by six young Black women. Agnes asked them to join, to work together. Given the choice, they said that they suffered more discrimination as Black people than as women.[8] Agnes told them that she thought that women have it worse, but she admitted to me that that was of course easy to say as a White woman. She added that NOW "tried very hard to recruit minority women; however, minority women might not have given as charitable an assessment of our efforts."

Nevertheless, the local NOW chapter has actively fought racism. According to Maggie, "the best thing that ever happened to a lot of us feminists" were the Women Against Racism conferences in 1988 and 1990. Having attended a similar conference while visiting her feminist daughter in a neighboring state, Maggie realized that despite her experiences in the civil rights movement, she still had a lot left to learn, or unlearn, about race. So she decided to work with other local activists to organize such a conference in her city. Both the state and local NOW chapter "were very much into it," but the conferences had broad support: "We got so many groups in this community to contribute money and make it a reality." By holding the conferences at the local university and working through NOW, the organizers were able to attract nationally recognized speakers like Lenora Fulani. And even though the theme was Women Against Racism, the organizers included a component facilitated by and directed towards men.

Maggie noted that one of the most powerful parts of the conference was the Speak Out, during which Black women had the opportunity to address an audience of White women on the topic of "what I never want to hear a White woman say again." Maggie feels that part of what made this experience so effective was that the Black women had had time to work together, empowering each other to speak the truth. And Maggie added that the White women, and a "real staunch NOW, NOW member" at one of the conferences in particular, really struggled to get past defensive, rather than accepting, responses to what they were hearing.

The conferences brought not only local organizations but also individual women together. After the first conference in 1988, the women who had organized it decided to meet regularly: "But, then we, a group of us then got together—White women, Black women, and Jewish women—and we met every single Monday night for two solid years." Helen gave a similar description of the diversity of the group: "We had everything: Jewish women, Black women, you know." Maggie exclaimed: "Oh, those Monday nights! You really got such a feeling for how awful it must be to carry both oppressions and ever to have to choose between them. But we built a lot of bridges."

Those relationships, however, would not have happened without effort and "real contact." Maggie emphasized the importance of racial equilibrium for facilitating honest communication. For example, she noted:

> But it was work. One thing we learned was the balance had to be there. We'd have a meeting, where maybe there were more Black women one time instead of White, and then at another meeting there'd be more White women than Black. When you'd get real willingness to speak and say what people thought was when there was a balance. And anybody ever felt like they were the one or two, and everybody else was, and you didn't know it was happening until you observed it. . . . Oh, yeah. When the balance was there, you'd get real communication, and anybody not caring, you know, what they said and how it felt and what happened. We learned a lot.

This open communication was transformative on both sides of the racial divide. Maggie described her better understanding of the daily "dance of accommodation" that Black women must negotiate, and she explained that many of the Black women came to identify themselves as feminists. This identification "was not a direct objective, you realize, it just happened with being together that much." Maggie's qualifying statement here is important, since White feminists have been guilty of trying to "educate" women

of color about the importance of feminism, a movement which, especially when it began, prioritized the needs of White women.[9] Those weekly meetings were, as Maggie said, "where the bridges with feminism were formed with Black women," where White and Black women were able to connect across difference.

Later, the meetings began to attract women who had not attended a conference or anything like it, "and they had a great difficulty fitting in, you know, acting, getting into the way we just suddenly all interacted with each other." Such was the strength of the relationships that formed among the initial group of women. Of the newcomers, Maggie described in particular a "sweet and naive" White woman who "would say things that would make everybody so upset." And yet she just "kept coming back" and learning more, until she was facilitating anti-racism workshops herself. She later became vice president of the NOW chapter. With time, racial balance, and effort, the women grew personally and in their relationships with each other. Maggie mused, "But that was, I'll tell you, to be able to make those kind of connections with Black women were real comforts, how would you say it, satisfactions of my life." Helen agreed: "I enjoyed that. I got a lot—I grew from that experience."

Through these meetings, the women began to organize and present workshops on, as Helen described them, "racism and understanding racism and all of it." The Unlearning Racism workshops lasted for three or four years, beginning with other NOW chapters in the state (through grant funding) and then taking place in the community and briefly through the local university. One problem was that certain organizations were not interested in the workshops because, as Maggie explained, they felt that the facilitators

would "be preaching to the converted." But Maggie attests that, even as a facilitator, just attending one workshop taught her tremendous lessons: "The things that I learned and the things that I observed, I could not believe I was learning." Eventually, some facilitators moved out of the area, and "acceptance in the community" declined. Organizations would pay to have anti-racism speakers come from outside of the community, rather than using the local group. Maggie also described a final workshop that she co-facilitated at a local social service agency a couple of years ago. There, she confronted her own assumptions about class and decided never to use the term "redneck" again.

Just talking about the conferences and workshops—what she learned and the people she met—got Maggie thinking about reviving them now. Significantly, the relationships did not completely disappear after the conferences, meetings, and workshops ended. Maggie noted: "Every so often, I keep, I keep in touch with the ones that have moved away and gone out of town. I'm a big card person, you know, for all their birthdays." She said that one correspondent wrote, "At that time in my life, I still can't believe that it actually happened," while one of the Jewish women described her difficulties in organizing a similar group in another state. Maggie has also kept in touch with one of the conference speakers, the Center for Human Rights Education founder and Executive Director Loretta Ross: "She really was one of the Black women that were involved, that I just took right to her right away." Maggie noted that the women who have remained in the area are still "doing the work in different ways." Helen also talked about women in the community working for equality in other ways—through music or

journalism, for example. She also talked about a NOW member who went on to become

a lawyer.

Certainly the trust, the lessons, and the community contacts from these various

projects have lasted:

> To me it was a bridge that I could never believe could have happened. . . . Yeah, the understanding on both sides was something that had to be built. . . . Because as we went along, we just learned so much. Just being facilitators, we learned so much. But it made, it made contact in the community between progressive groups that has been invaluable all these years. (Maggie)

> But there's somebody out of each group where you could, and I don't want to say, be a shoulder to cry on, but somebody you could bounce ideas off of and they bounce ideas off of you and you bounce ideas off of them. (Wilma)

Thinking about her social networks as "another kind of social work," Wilma added, "So

it's people from here and there, and we keep in touch even if I'm not active in one group

or the other, or they're not active in the groups I'm active in, we do keep in touch."

Feminism has clearly shaped these women's places in their community's web of

relationships. At times, these women's feminist commitments have cost them

connections to certain networks, as in the example of religious organizations. But

through the NOW chapter, they have formed enduring relationships that help them

address personal and community problems. Both through individual initiatives and

through the actions of NOW as a unit, all five women have made connections with other

activists and organizations, connections that have made a lasting impact on their

community. Organized around the four research questions posed in Chapter I, Chapter V

summarizes key findings and discusses potential implications.

Endnotes

[1] See also Chapter V regarding the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital.

[2] Note that a focus on institutional forms of discrimination to the *exclusion* of individual responsibility and agency could be interpreted as serving the interests of those who benefit from this oppression.

[3] Recognizing the limited usefulness of these labels, close analysis of the transcripts reveals key elements of liberal feminism but some indications of radical feminism, as each are defined by Tong (1989) and described in Chapter II. A focus on identical civil rights and educational opportunities for men and women is characteristic of liberal feminism, for example in the push for the ERA discussed by Maggie, Dessa, and Agnes. But Maggie clearly describes the oppression of women as the most fundamental kind of oppression, and this belief is a basic tenet of radical feminism.

[4] Dessa added that, although the local peace organization is in the same position, the ACLU chapter, in which she has a leadership role, still meets monthly and has a solid board. In addition to their newsletter, the NOW chapter circulates legislative updates via e-mail and meets annually, as well as in response to specific events, for example to show support for local Islamic women in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

[5] Like Wilma, Helen belongs to a congregation. She described her current religious beliefs as United Methodist. But she explained, "I'm a Methodist, but I don't attend church, so, you know, I consider myself to be very spiritual, but I don't attend church.

And that's another interview all by itself." Indeed, most of our interview focused on Helen's professional networks, and it is not clear whether Helen's feminism has had any impact on her relationship to her church.

[6] I had initially named Dessa as the primary organizer of this event, but she explained that the three organizers operated non-hierarchically, "the way feminists tend to work."

[7] As the anti-violence organization's apparent ambivalence towards the NOW chapter suggests, bridges can be double-edged (Barbara S. Heyl, personal communication, November 4, 2003).

[8] As Collins (1998:66-67), among many others, notes, U.S. feminism can appear to benefit White women exclusively.

[9] See Nicholson (1990:1) and Ferree and Hess (2000:123).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The activist stories of these five women, all current or former members of a NOW chapter in a mid-sized midwestern city, can illuminate our understanding of feminist consciousness and social capital in this particular context. While these women's experiences are not necessarily representative of the experiences of all chapter members, they illustrate the rich and complex interconnections between these two concepts, as depicted in the appended concept map. This chapter addresses each of the four research questions in turn, the answers to which overlap somewhat. These answers are rooted in the interview texts and in the analysis of these texts in Chapter IV.

Discussion of Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do these midwestern feminists describe their involvement with the feminist movement and the growth of their feminist consciousness?

The second wave of the feminist movement and NOW began in the 1960s and made impressive gains through the 1970s, despite the failure to pass the ERA. The 1980s witnessed a conservative backlash against feminism, as well as efforts by feminists and their organizations to confront racism and to value diversity as a strength. From the 1990s to the present, feminist organizations and their members continue to emphasize inclusiveness and to assert feminism's relevance and the need for ongoing activism.

Maggie, Wilma, Dessa, Agnes, and Helen have been right on the crest of the second wave of the feminist movement.

Their feminist consciousness comes from combined experiences and factors. Of all five stories of the growth of feminist consciousness, Maggie's was the most detailed and in some ways the most dramatic, since she once actively promoted causes that she now discredits. For example, she used to write convincingly on the pro-Life side of the abortion debate, and now she if firmly pro-Choice. Now actively promoting the ERA, she used to instruct young Catholic couples in maintaining the status quo, telling the women, "If you want to be equal, you'll lose your superiority!" Interestingly, some of those same skills that served Maggie well in her work for the Catholic church—writing and speaking persuasively—became tools for promoting feminist causes. Maggie articulates feminism as finding her own voice:[1]

> That's the biggest attainment you have, when you realize you're finally finding your own voice. It's not what you were brought up to believe, it's not what your parents taught you, it's not what you got from religion. *You're* thinking this and *you're* saying this and it's *yours*.

A significant part of becoming a feminist for Maggie was the struggle to find this voice in the context of Catholicism's patriarchy. Related to finding her own voice, Maggie also articulates feminism as independence, as liberty, from religious dictates and from people's expectations. Her feminist consciousness, inspired in part by her daughter's activism, freed her from her priest's notions of "a good Catholic girl" and her mother's voice in her head.

Like Maggie, Wilma grappled with the tension between the sexism she observed in the Catholic church and her feminist sensibilities. The articulation between feminism and personal growth is prevalent in Wilma's interviews. She talks about feminism as a way to "expand the possibilities for women and girls to develop themselves." Her parents encouraged her to pursue a career as a doctor, and Wilma sees a direct connection between equality in the public sphere and in the private sphere: "You can't have feminism in the political sphere, and then have Mrs. President go home and have her husband tell her to do this and do that." Although Wilma learned a lot about feminism while studying to become a doctor, she grew even more after medical school: "When I got to [midwestern city] there was a NOW chapter started, and I learned from that, and I learned from that, let me tell you. And it was a great awakening. And that's kind of where I served my apprenticeship as a feminist." Wilma describes how she continues to grow in feminism.

Dessa also talked about feminism as growth, but she strongly connects feminism to rights. Dessa was raised in a very conservative church that limited her access to friends and discouraged higher education:

> Now that I, I look back on it and realize why—subconsciously they simply don't want you to have knowledge. Knowledge might interfere with their teachings and holding you down in your place, men and women both as far as that went.

These religious beliefs almost kept her, the valedictorian of her high school class, from pursuing a career in nursing. Her mother's support was the deciding factor. Having gotten an education and having rejected that restrictive fundamentalist environment, Dessa is an advocate for rights, for example, the right to choose an abortion and the right

to euthanasia. Talking about different causes that she and her husband have been

involved in, she noted, "The whole thing, you know, is a weaving together of, with the

thread that runs the same really, is rights." Of course, with rights, and the awareness of

rights, comes responsibility. Because so many worthwhile causes have that common

thread of rights, Dessa feels pulled in many directions and at times overwhelmed. She

said wryly: "You feel like, 'I wished I'd never become a feminist.' I wish I'd never

become *conscious* of it."

Agnes also talked about feminism in terms of rights and responsibilities. She

articulates feminism as doing the right thing. Having herself had a "marvelous

upbringing" and having taught elementary school for many years, she feels very strongly

about the importance of giving back: "I think it's imperative that a part of your

upbringing is being taught that you absolutely must put back in because you've taken so

much out. It is true: no man is an island. You don't exist by yourself." The

Presbyterian church having been an important part of Agnes's childhood, she used Jesus

as an example of this ethic and went on to talk about corporate and civic responsibility.

Agnes talked about the racism that she witnessed as a young adult and the duty that we

all have to educate children about how things used to be and their responsibility to

continue to make things better. *Everyone* shares this responsibility: "The fact that you

have a public school education, I don't care for how long, you owe. You have a debt.

You have to repay it. And I want everybody to know this."

Helen also talked about feminism in terms of community. During her interview,

Helen connected feminism to broader concerns about equality. Having experienced both

racial discrimination and the glass ceiling in the workplace, she talked about feminism as part of a value system that includes "treating people as individuals" and "supporting diversity." This is the basic value system behind her belief in collaboration: "It was no way, and I do believe in this strongly, there is no way that you can do anything by yourself. It's all about collaboration." For collaborative efforts to work well, there has to be "mutual respect," and a feminist consciousness is a part of that.

Maggie, Wilma, Dessa, Agnes, and Helen each came to understand feminism, to articulate it in particular terms, as a result of their specific life experiences.[2] In this text, I have focused on those experiences that emerged most strongly in the interviews, like religious upbringing and family dynamics. Interestingly, the three women who emphasized their conservative religious backgrounds are the ones who are currently involved in NOW and are still engaged in explicit feminist activism. All five women were exposed to other 1960s movements in the Midwest, although Maggie, Agnes, and Helen talked more about the impact of these movements than did Wilma or Dessa. Agnes explained, "As the civil rights movement impacted on me, I turned around and gave it back to feminism." The social climate was obviously quite different then, as Dessa noted: "A lot of things that women just take for granted today, I didn't even think about."

Research Question 2: How has the feminist ideology of these midwestern women affected the evolution of their social networks, both informal and formal, and how have these networks affected their feminist ideology?

The articulation, the connection, between feminist consciousness and social networks emerged in interviews with each of the five participants. The following

discussion summarizes what the connections look like and under what circumstances they were made. Feminist consciousness has shaped these women's social networks. As described in Chapter IV, family relationships changed in some cases, and not always for the better. Some family ties suffered strain but are still existent, as in Maggie's case. The strains seemed to be most severe where both parties are living in the same community and both are fairly public and vocal about their beliefs. Not surprisingly, feminist consciousness appears to have increased social networks with other active feminists, particularly in the early days of the NOW chapter. (Today, it would appear that there are fewer active feminists locally with whom to network.) Feminist consciousness and resultant activism also appear to have resulted in increased networks through liberal organizations (except perhaps in the case of Agnes's preference for free-lancing, for working on her own). At the same time, feminist consciousness and activism may well have limited professional networks, for example to the extent that Wilma's energies are diverted from mainstream medical organizations. Lastly, religious networks may have diminished as a result of feminist consciousness—most clearly where these feminists abandoned organized religion altogether.

The reverse is also true: social networks appear to have had a similarly mixed impact on development of feminist consciousness. Maggie had the disapproval of her Catholic friends to think about when she began to campaign for the ERA (and she was captured on film standing next to Betty Friedan with a "Catholics Act for ERA" sign) and particularly when she became openly pro-Choice. Dessa's church sheltered her from these kinds of connections altogether. At the same time, it was Maggie's daughter who

brought her into the feminist movement. Wilma tells the wonderful story of the woman

in her folk dancing group who impressed her with feminism in action:

> I will be eternally grateful to CeeCee. We were talking about something, and I think she might have been talking about feminism. She was getting caught up in it, and she described it to me in such a positive manner, and a guy came up and said, "Will you dance?" And she says, "I'm sorry," she says, "I'm talking with Wilma now, but the next dance, come ask me." And I thought, "Wow, she will, she will give up a chance to dance with *a guy* to finish the conversation with me!" And I was tremendously pleased to see that it had ramifications in, you know, it wasn't just theoretical. This was something that you incorporated into your life.

Agnes was invited by a friend to attend that first meeting of the local NOW chapter, and

her younger sister was the first to tell her about the ERA.

Significantly, social networks have contributed to the success of particular

feminist events for the local NOW chapter, like the Women Against Racism conferences

and the resulting Unlearning Racism workshops. And each of the women indicated that

she has learned much through her experience in the local NOW network. NOW members

appear to have been adept at mentoring each other into feminism. About 15 years

younger than Maggie, Wilma became a feminist before Maggie did but talks about all

that she learned from Maggie.

Sometimes feminist activism may not result in actual social networks so much as

the sense of possible networks, as Maggie describes:

> I know if people out there understand this, what I'm saying, or someone writes a letter that you've never even seen or known and they're saying just what you, how you wish you could've put it. It is, it's a wonderful progress, and your being in tune, you know, with people that you're really in tune with and you know you can't be the only one.

Or feminist consciousness has resulted in a general approach to relationships. Wilma reflects: "And, obviously I can't 100 percent judge my own actions, but, yeah, I try to be, relate to women as, I guess the word is hackneyed, but 'sisters.' Sisters in experience, we all have common experiences."[3]

Helen talked about the importance of informal networks, particularly "at this stage of our life, and in the kind of work we do." She explained: "Because I think it's, it's important to have those networks, especially the personal, friends and so forth, that I'm really working on trying to keep those, maintain those relationships. Like going to the sorority meetings." She also emphasized the importance of living your beliefs, of putting your ideals into action, over simply joining organizations.

Both Helen and Dessa gave examples of activist friends encouraging each other in their work, through words and deeds: an activist can encourage activism in others, within and without organizations. The connection between social ties and *collective* activism is hardly a new one (Oliver 1984:604). Mario Diani (2001) finds that participation in collective action builds new relationships that often continue even after the activities end. These new relationships may provide a foundation for later movement activities (Diani 2001). Social movements do not just depend on pre-existing social capital: they also produce new forms of it (Diani 2001). And the fact that personal networks affect one's beliefs and behaviors is also well established (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948).

Helen's and Dessa's examples of friends encouraging activism highlight the potentially recursive relationship between feminism and social capital *at the individual level*: where feminist consciousness leads to activism, social capital may form and/or

deepen with individuals or networks who will encourage further feminist activism (and possibly deeper feminist consciousness). By attending a feminist multicultural organization event organized by a friend, these women may meet "a lot of interesting women," as Wilma did, and expand their social networks. In order to be supportive of their friends, these feminists may engage in other kinds of progressive activism: they may "support each other's causes," as Helen described.[4]

Both Wilma's and Helen's references to the "social work" that they do calls for further consideration. Wilma sees herself and others in her network as a source of information and support, and Helen talked about her efforts to build networks for her clients and to foster collaboration among organizations. All five women have a strong social conscience and a focus on relationships in the community. Each in her own way expressed the desire and the duty, born of life experience, to make a positive contribution in this mid-sized midwestern city. There is a real community spirit, a desire not to, as Wilma expressed it, think "in insular terms," but to make connections.

Research Question 3: How might these women's locations in intersecting social hierarchies shape their descriptions of the growth of their feminist consciousness and its impact on their social networks and vice versa?

Even though all five are women, each of the participants occupies a different position in Weber's (2001) intersecting social hierarchies, and these differences surely shape their views about feminism and their relationships. Although these women have other characteristics that are important in intersecting social hierarchies, such as age, the focus here will be on sex, race, class, sexuality, and religion. Clearly, being women, and experiencing discrimination as women, played an important role in the evolution of

feminist consciousness. Likewise, there seemed to be a common acknowledgement among these women of the value of networks, both formal and informal.

The four White women—Maggie, Wilma, Dessa, and Agnes—demonstrated awareness of the privilege that their skin color affords them. To use Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) term, these women have "race cognizance": they recognize the fundamental ways that race affects White women's lives and advantages. Asked about her race, Agnes replied that she is "very, very Caucasian . . . so White." She reflected, "A lot of feminists are White and blend in well . . . . If you're a Black person, you stand out. There's no place to hide." Wilma pointed out, "Women's rights connect with civil rights, racism affects women you know." In many ways, these women have moved beyond race cognizance to racism cognizance, Ellen Kaye Scott's (2001) extension of Frankenberg's (1993) concept. Racism cognizance is the ability to identify instances of racism and one's own perpetuation of racism (Ellen Kaye Scott 2001:134). Both Maggie and Agnes recounted instances of racial discrimination that they had witnessed in the past—eating at a restaurant or working in an office and seeing Black individuals denied those experiences. Maggie reflected, "The kind of racism that we ran into when we were kids, it's just hard to believe." And Maggie was very open about the lifelong process of overcoming the racist attitudes many people of her generation learned as children: "How many of us are still working on our racism?" Even after her activism in the civil rights movement, when she attended an anti-racism conference in the 1980s, "I was thinking I was just going to go and observe, isn't this wonderful, and, my God, I came back with my head spinning with how much, with how much farther I had to go."

Helen was the only participant whom I asked explicitly if she identified herself as a feminist.[5] She replied:

> I think so. You know, I'm not a, I don't go out and do a lot of advocacy and so forth, but, yeah, I think so. I think, I think in the context of just having a strong belief in diversity and equality in general—yeah, I think I am a feminist. [both laugh] I have to say I'm a feminist, yeah.

Asked about how she came to identify with feminism, Helen replied that her "experience as an African-American has been part of it in terms of oppression." While Helen placed her feminism in the context of broader convictions about equality and diversity, the White women seemed to claim feminism decisively and to define feminism as including principles of equality and diversity. As mentioned in Chapter IV, Maggie and Agnes, although both active in the civil rights movement and earnest in discussing the evils of racism, prioritize sexism as the worse of the two.

Wilma pointed out that "a lot of racism is socio-economic distinctions." She sees racism in the "property value mentality" that equates racial minorities moving in with threats to White people's "financial freedom" and "perfectly manicured lawns and lifestyles circumscribed." But Wilma gave examples that countered stereotypes and expectations about people who have low incomes, and she also talked about the tendencies of the more powerful to look too much to their own interests. There is no solidarity, which just perpetuates people's "intertwined" fears of those who are different. These are fears that can be overcome, as in Maggie's vow never to use the term "redneck" again.

All five participants appeared to occupy the middle or upper-middle part of the class spectrum, but with some differences in educational and economic level. Agnes seemed perhaps most aware of her own privilege in this regard. For example, she talked about being able to go where she wants to: "That's powerful. I feel keenly for people who lack transportation resources, because I think that's key." In general, these women did not talk as much about poverty or lack of material resources as they did about sexism and racism, with the exception of Wilma and Helen. Through her job, Helen is well acquainted with the challenges faced by people experiencing poverty, including the fact that many others are "negative or hostile towards people that are coming off of welfare."

Interestingly, too, all five women are most likely heterosexual, and only two talked about homosexuality. For Wilma, Agnes, and Helen, the topic did not come up at all. It is possible that when they think of common experiences that women share, they think of experiences that *heterosexual* women tend to share, like having husbands. Dessa, who noted that her views on this topic had changed over the years, described gay and lesbian issues as "part of feminism" and talked about Maggie's desire to get the city council to prohibit discrimination on the basis of perceived or actual sexuality (a goal which was recently achieved). Maggie, who started a local chapter of PFLAG and has a daughter who is lesbian, talked about homosexuality in relation to other forms of oppression and the challenge of getting people to accept gay rights as a progressive cause.

Significant in light of the women's differing religious backgrounds, only Maggie really spoke about religious discrimination. Maggie talked about the "antisemitism [that]

was fed to us as we grew up" and the effort that it takes to unlearn those attitudes. What really makes her angry is the "misuse of religion," with "any one group of a religion deciding that it is *the* right one." She explains:

> The sad part about the whole thing about religion, most of us are born into the one that we either live out or grow away from, some people are converted of course, how can it possibly be that the Catholic church, the Muslim church, or whatever it is, is the one true church? If you're born into it, that's just an accident of birth, for God's sake, you know?

Noting that in the past the Catholic church has had these tendencies, she is particularly critical of the "far right Christian Coalition people" in this regard, and concerned about their scapegoating of atheists, agnostics, and Jewish people over issues like prayer in public schools. Maggie is also critical of religions that exclude women from decision-making processes.

Both Maggie and Helen expressed impatience with talk about "diversity" as opposed to action. Maggie also emphasized that it is those with the most power in the intersecting social hierarchies who need to fight prejudice and discrimination:

> In other words, when they're doing it, it matters, because it means that they're working on the problem from the people who can make a difference, make, from within a group you can make more difference than someone outside accusing you of doing something and wanting you to change.

Speaking of a Black activist friend in the civil rights movement, Maggie reflected, "I always remember him saying, 'If White people would fight racism, I could go fishing.' So, I say, 'If men would fight sexism, we women could go fishing.'" So, from whichever position in intersecting social hierarchies these women view the world, they have their work cut out for them. That is why their shared social conscience is so important.

Research Question 4: In the local community context, how might feminism be a force for bonding and bridging social capital?

Asked to reflect about her community, Wilma replied, "This is home, with all its warts." She added, "This is kind of where I've committed my life to. There's an old seventies saying: 'Bloom where you're planted.'" Agnes echoed that sentiment: "So, see, this is, this is my place. I have a profound sense of belonging where I am." Noting that some people complain about the city's shortcomings, Wilma thinks that it is more important to build on its positive aspects. Dessa, for example, gave a positive assessment of the city's liberal community. Agnes described the city as a place "where people have their feet on the ground and their heads on frontwards."

Although she emphasized the positive, Wilma cited a number of areas for improvement in the community. There is a lot of work for activists to do. But Agnes does not see the negatives as necessarily a bad thing: "So, you can be shaped both by the positive and the negative areas of light and darkness, sound and silence, resources available, resources lacking." In other words, adversity can be a good thing. Agnes gave the example of Betty Friedan experiencing discrimination in the community that she grew up in and eventually left: "The contributions she's made to feminism are immeasurable." And so, even though the foci of feminist activism may be on the urban centers of the East Coast or the West Coast, much is happening in cities like this one:

> But the real work that's being done is in the grassroots, in, and of course being down here, in the Midwest, I tend to see that more, and I'm just a little, I'm not even, I'm not even mad at them [national NOW], but it's just that, I can see that their perspective is that the world revolves around New York and Washington, D.C., and, you know it doesn't. (Wilma)

> They're [national NOW] not us, what's going on at the grassroots is where you carry out all of these things that women's consciousness leads them to do—the women at the YW[CA], the women who work on all of these things that are feminist things. They may not even know they're really feminists, but. (Maggie)

Each of the women has been a feminist and an activist in this mid-sized midwestern city for three decades. And through this work, as Wilma noted, "So you make connections, and one of the advantages of being in one place for a long time is that you can make them and keep them."

An important finding emerging from the interviews with these midwestern feminists is that they *do* think of their social networks as social capital, as a resource to draw upon to solve collective and individual problems. For Agnes, social capital can mean material resources, for example when she paid NOW dues for another member. And local NOW members shared generously of their own material resources to help those women who called their domestic violence hotline. Wilma talks about the information and guidance available to her and that she provides to others in her networks: "And it's not the kind of network where X calls me and says, 'We need 50,000 people rallying against [?].' It's not that kind of network, but it's, 'Wilma, I'm faced with this, this, and this.'" She emphasizes the reciprocity inhering in her networks: "They do the same for me." Wilma highly values "the resources, the friendship, the mutual support, [and] the advice" available to her. Helen talks about her social capital in terms of not only encouragement but also action: "We not only support, I mean, we're, we, we're, we're the girlfriends that get the job done, and help each other. And that means a lot to

me, too." Are these five women redefining social capital (Maura Toro-Morn, personal communication, November 4, 2003)?

What they describe is in fact much more than the term "social capital" implies. Definitions of social capital like Lin's (2001:19)—"investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace"—seem a disservice to the depth of human connection described in these interviews. Even my adaptation of Brehm and Rahn's (1997) definition—the norms and "web of cooperative relationships between citizens that facilitates resolution of collection [*sic*] action problems" (p. 999), as well as individual problems—lacks emotional resonance.[6] Smith and Kulynych (2002) are correct in their assertion that vibrant community networks cannot be reduced to mere economic transactions: these interviews reveal the limitations implicit in the economic model of social capital. The social capital concept as it has been defined and used, particularly in quantitative research, is so pragmatic that it obscures the kind of emotional support described here—it is devoid of the deeper meanings that these women attach to it. Smith and Kulynych (2002:144) may well be right that replacing the term "social capital" with "social capacity" would benefit academic and lay discourse. At the very least, analysis of these findings calls for a redefinition or, better still, an amplification of the term social capital, such that it is sensitive to people's lived experiences.

Having established that what these women describe in their social networks extends the definition of social capital described in Chapter I, the challenge became identifying Putnam's (2000:2) bonding and bridging forms. I found it difficult at times to determine whether the different groups that the women associate with are more

homogeneous or heterogeneous. Even restricting oneself to demographics and leaving political or ideological perspectives, or shared experiences, aside, it is difficult to label a group as one or the other, to value one kind of similarity or difference over another. When thinking about both bonding and bridging social capital, I attended to general orientation—does a relationship or activity appear to foster additional connections or to limit them?

I found that bonding and bridging social capital both are at work in the lives of these feminists. Bonding social capital is more likely to create enmity among different social groups (Putnam 2000:3). This antagonism can lead to breaks, for example between feminists and more conservative elements in religious organizations, in professional networks, and in families. The hostility is not one-sided. All five women talked about popular negative stereotypes of feminists and expressed considerable frustration at conservative individuals and groups in religion, politics, education, and/or the media. It is possible that any ideology, even one built on equality, can cause some divisions, if that egalitarian ideology is not tolerated by the larger society.

R. Claire Snyder (2002:180) in fact argues that the right-wing backlash against the gains of the civil rights and women's movements is a root cause of the national decline in social capital. She takes Putnam (2000) to task for failing to discuss this reactionary backlash, along with related attacks on economic justice and progressive government in the 1980s (Snyder 2002). She argues that these assaults are the primary cause for decreasing levels of social trust, increasing suspicions of public institutions, and the rending of U.S. civic fabric (Snyder 2002:167). Snyder (2002) explains:

> The racist backlash against integrating Black people into American civic life fed into attacks on the federal government and the welfare state, which were seen as disproportionately benefiting African Americans, and the anti-feminist backlash against women's civic equality galvanized the masses. (Pp.180-81)

By rejecting not only radical aspirations but also fundamental democratic standards such as equality before the law, "the American Right played a central role in the destruction of social capital" (Snyder 2002:180).

It is hardly surprising then that the feminist consciousness of these five women appears to have contributed to negative feelings about conservative individuals and groups and breaks in their social networks. What is notable is their openness to bridging these gaps. Perhaps their bonds with each other provide a foundation on which to build bridges. Wilma, for example, is still participating in her church. And Dessa pointed out, "Well, we don't, we're very, we're very careful never to criticize anybody's position, where they are, because we realize we had that position ourselves." Maggie echoed:

> I could've been Phyllis Schlafly so easily.[7] I was, in the fifties and sixties. That's why I've got great faith for far-right women. I know they can come along eventually. Oh, it's what makes it easier for people like me and [Wilma] and others . . . because we were there, and we went through our struggles, and we made, made the changes in ourselves.

Maggie went from being "afraid of feminists with a small 'f' approach"—"that was scary, you didn't want to get involved with that"—to a powerful voice for equal rights for women. Members of the NOW chapter were instrumental in staging two Women Against Racism conferences, in meeting every week for two solid years with a diverse group of women to discuss racism, and in conducting Unlearning Racism workshops in their own and other communities. This kind of activism built meaningful bridges with individuals

and organizations, bridges that have had lasting positive effects. As Gittell et al. (2000) found to be true of women-led CDOs, this feminist organization is effective at building social capital.

These women see their feminist consciousness as a work in progress, as a widening circle. They continue to learn about the wheel of oppression, and they see the relationship between feminism and other social issues, between institutions and individuals, between themselves and their community. Wilma asserted, "You realize that it's not, you're not isolated, or your cause is not the only one, that this is all connected."[8] That recognition of connection offers great promise for building social capital.

Conclusions and Implications

This small, in-depth study has made several significant contributions. Detailed interviews with five current or former members of a midwestern NOW chapter have documented a piece of oral history about this particular community. This research is perhaps the only qualitative, individual-level examination of social capital in women-dominated activities. Analysis and discussion of these interviews critiques and consequently enriches our theoretical understanding of social capital from a feminist perspective: the social capital that emerged here transcends the utilitarian, econometric concept in much of the literature.

These interviews have also turned the spotlight away from large urban centers, particularly those on the coasts, and cast it on feminist activism in a mid-sized city in the Midwest. These women's voices and struggles can enlighten readers, as they enlightened

me, about the sacrifices and triumphs of three decades of feminist activism in a conservative area. The qualitative approach of this study has highlighted shades of meaning in each woman's understanding of what feminism is about and revealed the potentially recursive relationship between individuals' feminist consciousness and social capital. The stories told here reveal feminism as relevant, active, and concerned with social justice for everyone. This particular midwestern NOW chapter was and, through the ongoing engagement of a core of committed activists, continues to be a force for social transformation.

The personal journeys documented here have revealed how dedication to feminist ideals has affected relationships with other individuals and groups, both positively and negatively, and how this commitment has had a lasting positive impact on the community. If social capital in the United States is indeed declining, as Putnam (2000) argues, there may be important lessons in those locations in our complex, stratified society that have potential to counter the trend. As Snyder (2002) implies, those individuals and groups advocating for social and economic justice have that potential, but they have little chance of achieving it when faced with conservative opposition. Policy makers seeking progressive government and grassroots activists promoting equality need to work in tandem. Together, they can demonstrate the social capital and greater social good that comes from equality in action. The kinds of bridges that these five feminist activists have made and their readiness to build new ones may be a model for community developers, for other feminist activists, and for readers of this text to use in creating deeper and stronger social capital in their own lives and communities.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research can address some of the limitations of this study. For example, most of the women that I interviewed are or have been officers in the NOW chapter, and most are still active in the chapter. Focusing on those members more on the fringes of a NOW chapter or on members of a different feminist organization altogether will further elucidate the complex interconnections between growing feminist consciousness and individuals' social capital. Future projects might also include more diverse women and/or feminist men. Examinations of feminist consciousness and social capital in other decades and areas of the United States would be useful for comparative purposes. Other projects might consider feminism and social capital at the organizational or community, rather than the individual, level. Developing effective qualitative approaches for these levels would be particularly useful.

How might the right-wing backlash described by Snyder (2002:180) have affected the relationship between feminism and social capital? A future study might examine the issue of adversity in relation to these two concepts. Less resistance to feminist ideology in more moderate or liberal communities may lessen the need to form bonds and bridges (Frank D. Beck, personal communication, October 30, 2003). More moderate or liberal community contexts could also potentially decrease the likelihood of individuals forming, identifying, and acting on their feminist consciousness. As Maggie noted, the successes of the women's movement have given women more options and perhaps fewer incentives

for activism. Fortunately for this mid-sized midwestern city, a core group of committed

feminists continues to be engaged.

Endnotes

[1] The theme of finding one's voice comes through strongly in Maggie's interviews. She talks about the importance of finding one's voice even among other feminists: when she first came into the local women's movement, she wanted the approval of its leaders, and it took a while before she felt she could disagree with them or really take ownership of what she was saying.

[2] While the use of Hall's (1986) articulation model here effectively elucidates the impact of specific past experiences on individuals' constructions of meaning in their present social worlds, it is beyond the scope of this project to obtain detailed biographical information and to systematically make *all* of the points of connection that led to the development of each woman's feminist consciousness: I have addressed only the most prominent themes from the interviews.

[3] See Bonnie Thornton Dill (1995:277) for discussion of the concept of sisterhood.

[4] Ferree and Hess (2000:137) point out that this is just what NOW has been encouraging its members to do: learn about different feminist perspectives and support one another's concerns.

[5] With the current members of NOW, this question was unnecessary, and with Agnes, her self-identification as a feminist became clear as she described what feminism meant to her.

[6] Please see the fourth endnote in Chapter I.

[7] Phyllis Schlafly mobilized politically conservative homemakers against the ERA.

[8] The number and kinds of connections that emerged through these interviews was both an inspiration (that these women value their relationships and articulate their holistic thinking so well) and a challenge (in presenting these inter-relationships in this text and concept map).

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL LETTERS

ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY

Research and Sponsored Programs

310 Hovey Hall
Campus Box 3040
Normal, IL 61790-3040
Telephone: (309) 438-2528
Facsimile: (309) 438-7912

April 1, 2002

Barbara Heyl
SOA 4660

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled **Feminism and Social Capital** for review by the Illinois State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has **Approved** this research protocol following an **Expedited Review** procedure. You may begin this research.

This protocol has been given the IRB number **2002-0097**. This number should be used in all correspondence with the IRB. You may proceed with this study from **3/29/02** to **3/29/03**. You must notify the IRB before **2/28/03** if you will need a continuation beyond that ending date.

This approval is valid only for the research activities, timeline, and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any changes to this protocol be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact Nancy Latham, Assistant Director of Research, at 438-8451 or myself in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
Campus Box 3040
310 Hovey Hall
Telephone: 438-8451

It is your responsibility to notify all co-investigators **(Beverly Beyer)**, including students, of the classification of this protocol as soon as possible.

Thank you for your assistance, and the best of success with your research.

William Vogler, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 438-8235

cc: Bill Tolone, Department Rep., 4660

An equal opportunity/affirmative action university encouraging diversity

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UNIVERSITY

Research and Sponsored Programs

310 Hovey Hall
Campus Box 3040
Normal, IL 61790-3040
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March 10, 2003

Barbara Heyl
4660 SOA

The Illinois State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has received your request for a continuation of the approval period for your research proposal titled **Feminism and Social Capital** (IRB number **2002-0097**). The IRB has reviewed your request and **Approved** a continuation of this protocol's approval period following **Expedited Review** procedures.

The new approval period for this protocol begins on **3/29/2003**. You may proceed with this research through **3/29/2004**. You must notify the IRB before **2/28/2004** if you will need a continuation beyond that date.

This approval is valid only for the research activities, timeline, and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any changes to this protocol be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact Nancy Latham, Assistant Director of Research, at 438-2528 or myself in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

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William Vogler, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 438-8235

cc: Bill Tolone, Department Rep, 4660

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does feminism mean to you?

    A. Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?

    B. If so, how did you come to embrace this identity?

    C. And if so, what's hard about being a feminist?

2. How would you describe your social networks (both formal and informal)?

    A. How do you think that feminism might have affected them, if at all?

    B. Conversely, how might your social networks have affected your feelings about feminism?

3. Tell me about the kinds of organizations that you are involved in now.

    A. Would you describe their membership as more homogeneous or heterogeneous?

    B. How so?

    C. If 1.A. is yes, in what ways are these organizations similar to or different from those you belonged to before becoming a feminist?

4. How do you see your current social resources?

    A. How do they shape your experiences?

    B. What part do they play in your life?

5. What impact, if any, do you think that feminism might have had on the level of trust that you have towards others?

    A. How might your feminism have changed your perceptions of others' motives?

B.   How might your evaluations of public institutions like Congress have changed as a result of feminism?

6.   What has your experience been in working with others locally to solve common problems?

A.   Can you give some examples?

B.   What kinds of strategies worked well?

7.   How do you feel about this community (as you define it)?

A.   How do you think local feminist organizations may have shaped it and/or been shaped by it?

B.   What kinds of challenges face this community? Its feminists?

8.   How would you describe yourself, in terms of your most important roles and social characteristics?

9.   DEMOGRAPHICS (if not already addressed): In what year were you born? / In what city and state were you born? / How would you describe your religious beliefs? / What about your racial and ethnic background? / What is your educational background? / Your occupation? / Is there anything that you would like to add about your family?

10.   Is there anything that you would like to add—have we left out anything about feminism and/or social networks that you think is important?

11.   What would you like your pseudonym to be?

APPENDIX C

CONCEPT MAP

OTHER FORMS OF PREJUDICE/ BIAS

which includes

WHEEL OF OPPRESSION

which maint...

RACISM

as central to/as part of

PUBLIC SPHERE

in

INEQUALITY

PRIVATE SPHERE

which may lead to increased

of

AWARENESS

which promotes

CON...

which may cause

SOCIAL CAPITAL BREAKS

in

professional networks

and/or

religious organizations

trust in government and/or politicians

and/or

and/or

nonliberal community

affirmation

or

intimidation

or

silence or misrepresentation

such as

responses from others

with ...

and/or

activist networks

organ... suc...

such as

nonparticipation

in

NOW Chapter

such as

women's groups and cross-issue efforts

peace network

and

which initiated

domestic abuse hotline (now anti-violence organization)

Catholics Act for ERA

PFLAG

and

clothesline project

Housewives for ERA

and

ACLU

newsletters and e-mail updates

anti-racism conferences, workshops, and weekly meetings

and

feminist multicultural organization

and

NAACP

monthly meetings

Women's Equality Day and other events

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

and

and

local civil rights organization

rap groups

in

League of Women Voters

us all — which is [defined by] →

us all — as → **individuals**

us all — as → **institutions**

SEXISM

which sees

FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

which is → **ON-GOING PROCESS** — intertwined with → **CHANGING NEEDS OVER LIFETIMES**

which may lead to → **FAMILY DYNAMICS**

which builds → **SOCIAL CAPITAL BONDS AND BRIDGES**

which may lead to → **REFLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM**

which may lead to

STRONG(ER) RELATIONSHIPS — through → **covert/overt supporters**

acceptance/ pride

role models

cross-generational contact

STRONG(ER) RELATIONSHIPS — with → **political differences/ discomfort** — which may be → **minimized** / **healed**

WEAK(ER) RELATIONSHIPS — which may be → **breaks in communication** — which may be → **healed**

WEAK(ER) RELATIONSHIPS — through → **scapegoats** / **suppressed resentment**

FAMILY DYNAMICS — through interaction among → **LOCAL ROOTS**

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE — such as → **Medical Committee for Human Rights** — and → **'social work' networks** — and → **teaching inclusiveness**

FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES — who may be → **like-minded** — committed to other progressive causes

like-minded / **committed to other progressive causes** — and → **encourage participation** / **provide support**

REFLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

[in organizations such as]

around → **issues** — such as → **reproductive/ abortion rights** — and → **pay equity** — and → **homemakers' rights**

which entails → **challenges** — e.g. → **taking up the cudgels alone** — and → **being pulled in multiple directions** — and → **staying informed/ sharing information**

which builds → **skills/ strategies** — e.g. → **persuasive letter-writing** — and → **compartmentalization/ selective participation** — and → **collaboration**

which requires → **work** — e.g. → **calling in to radio programs** — and → **supporting political campaigns** — and → **serving on boards**

in

APPENDIX D

ACRONYM KEY

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AMWA	American Medical Women's Association
CDOs	community development organizations
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
ERA	Equal Rights Amendment
FFM	Fund for the Feminist Majority
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NOW	National Organization for Women
PAC	Political Action Committee
PFLAG	Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
WEAL	Women's Equity Action League
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association