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ABSTRACT

The research presented in this study examines who feminists are and what kinds of life experiences may have contributed to the process of becoming a feminist. A discussion of the barriers to the emergence of a women's movement and a reconsideration of some current explanations of the emergence of a movement at this particular historical moment provide some context for a study of the social development of feminists. Criterion for selecting study subjects was self-identification in terms of commitment and action; in all, 54 women were interviewed, all of whom were students at the time of the interviews and were from predominantly middle class homes. The composite picture of the contemporary feminist which emerges from the research is described in terms of three non-exclusive and sometimes mutually reinforcing models: the bright academic, the father's girl, and the early independent. While the process of becoming a feminist was most often a gradual evolution rather than a sudden conversion, most of the respondents were able to cite specific events and periods during their lives when they became conscious of their oppression as women. (Author/SES)

SOCIETAL AND FAMILIAL SUPPORTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINISTS

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Revision of a seminar paper titled "On Becoming A Feminist" presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, New Orleans, 1972

ABSTRACT

Feminism did not die after the passage of the 19th Amendment: it became privatized. Broad social and economic changes weakened the hold of tradition on women by sending unprecedented numbers of women into the labor market and into higher education. This process increased the social visibility of the subordinate status of women. Two groups of women began to articulate the dimensions of that subprdinate status. They were (1) the young, radical and educated women, and (2) the older, educated, professional, and middle class women. A large minority of middle class women, who had been prepared through differential socialization to see themselves as independent and as having alternatives to the housewife-mother role, responded positively when a feminist interpretation became culturally available.

The developmental experiences of the feminists in our study comprised three non-exclusive and sometimes mutually reinforcing situations: the bright academic, the father's girl, and the early independent. The process of becoming a feminist was most often a gradual evolution rather than a sudden conversion. However, most of our respondents were able to cite specific events and periods during their lives when they became conscious of their oppression as women. Following the recognition of their victimization, these latent feminists began to evolve into overt feminists.

Symbolically and in actuality women have always been on the lower rungs, in the back seat, or in the kitchen while men have been on the higher rungs, in the driver's seat, or in the inner chambers making the decisions. Women occupy their special place by virtue of the fact that they are women. At some times, in some places, some women say "no" to their oppression and exploitation. As all of us know, many women, enough to make a women's movement, are denying the legitimacy of present definitions of their place. Understanding the development at a particular time of a social movement focused on long-tolerated inequities is a critical problem for sociologists. The question is: Why now? An explanation can be couched in terms of social disorganization or the weakening of social controls in the process of social change. Gerlach and Hine (1970: 197) suggest that social change may be discontinuous within the social system and hence lead to further movements for change.

Historical or long term changes which have not been adequately integrated into other sectors of the society present one instance of this. Another instance occurs when persons labor to shape the direction and form of on-going changes. These two instances are interrelated. When long term changes have not been adequately integrated into society, it follows that persons are being differentially socialized to different and conflicting expectations. The consequent lack of consensus among people may lead persons to seek to affect, to shape, the direction of on-going processes in order to guarantee desired change. In sum, inequities have always been present in society. Social movements emerge when changes in structure create both the conditions

under which action is possible and the people who are there and ready to act.

Against the backdrop of these questions concerning the emergence of the women's movement, we have focussed on the following specific issues. Who are the women who refuse to accomodate to the limited opportunities which society provides? How is it that some women find the resources to revolt against their prescribed position in society? In researching these questions we intensively interviewed 54 college women feminists on the east and west coast. We were primarily interested in examining who feminists are and what kinds of life experiences may have contributed to the process of becoming a feminist. This research concerning the characteristics and life experiences of movement adherents may be as important in answering the "why now" question as the question of what long term structural changes have been inadequately integrated into the social system.

The following discussion of the barriers to the emergence of a woman's movement and a reconsideration of some current explanations of the emergence of a movement at this particular historical moment provides the context for our study of the social development of feminists.

The Emergence of a Movement

The literature of the women's movement (Bird, 1968; Morgan, 1970; Gornick and Moran, 1971), and to some extent the literature of academic social science (Andreas, 1971; Bernard, 1966; Epstein, 1970; Safilibs-Rothschild, 1972) has detailed the processes, economic and social, which consign women to a less than equal place. The most

significant of these include the very early sex-role socialization, the lack of a structural base for the organization of women; and the relative economic powerlessness of women. These same factors can be viewed as barriers to recognition by women that they are subordinate and disadvantaged economically and socially. These factors are also obstacles to action for change in that subordinate status, including the development of a women's movement.

How, then, can the eruption of feminism in the late sixties be explained? The convergence of three processes noted by Dixon (1972) were undoubtedly essential in the making of this unlikely social movement. As she points out, the three processes were: the steady movement of larger and larger proportions of adult, white women into the labor market and into the less desirable and more poorly paid jobs; the tarnishing of the dream of utopia in suburbia and the growing dissastisfaction of middle class women; and the Civil Rights movement and the later New Left which seriously questioned old patterns of behavior and thought. Inequity came to be seen as endemic to all systems of stratification. In a curious way, the avant-gardism of these reformers and revolutionaries highlighted the remaining unidentified inequity, namely sexism.

We agree with this analysis: in various ways the barriers to the development of a broad movement were being eroded. The most important factors, we believe, were the rapid increases in the female labor force and the steadily increasing numbers of women in higher education. (The first, a response to demand factors in a changing occupational structure, the second, a consequence of affluence.) The entry of large numbers of women into the labor force began to make the underlying relationships between men and women more

visible. The superordinate-subordinate nature of those relationships had been submerged in the particularism of marriage and the family. With the movement of vast numbers of women outside the home and into relatively disadvantaged work roles, the subordinate position of women as an aggregate became clear to many. The myth that the battle had been won, that women, middle class ones at least, were equal to men in the society, began to be disputed. Going to work for pay, even as a secondary wage earner, also began in reality to loosen the constraints of economic dependence and powerlessness. And both work and school provided opportunities for interchange outside of the limits of the wife-mother role for an increasing number of women.

Visibility of the structural position of women was enhanced by events which took place in the middle class suburban home. Increasing numbers of women with higher education and the movement of women into paying jobs were important factors here too. The middle class educated woman of the forties and fifties may have been the first generation--and possibly the last--of American women to buy the idea of separate but equal, to really think that they could be full-time mothers and homemakers and at the same time women absorbed in their own activities and careers. To previous generations of middle class women, it was clear that our society forced women to choose either-or. For most women there was, in effect, only one choice. Many women who were in college during and immediately after World War II were of another persuasion; they thought they could have it both ways. They found that they could not, particularly as they moved to suburbia. The reason lay in the basic structuring of work and family life, of demographic and ecological factors, as well as in the economic

exploitation and psychological oppression of women as a whole in this society. Life in suburbia cannot easily be rearranged to free the chauffeur-cook-gardener-laundress, etc. for other kinds of work. The other kinds of work which are available, within a suitable distance, and with suitable hours, tend to be dull, routine, and poorly paid. Supporting services, such as nursery schools and domestic help, which were at least minimally available in the city, were much more difficult to get. Many middle class women, then, felt cheated by the contradictions between their expectations and the opportunities which were objectively available to them. We are arguing that many middle class women did not fall for the Feminine Mystique. Rather, they believed a myth which claimed that inequality had been ended and that there were no contradictions between being a mother and having a career. When they discovered that the myth was a lie and a mystification, some of them were ready for a feminist interpretation of their fate.

While structural barriers to the development of a broad women's movement were being eroded by changes which weakened the grip of the family on the woman's life, differential socialization processes were producing women who were latent feminists. Although early sex role socialization can be seen as a major inhibiting facor to movement development, it is also true that socialization occurs within different environments and with widely varying consequences. It is our contention that certain kinds of childhood and adolescent experiences contribute to an openness to a feminist interpretation of experience, and to the likelihood of some sort of affiliation with the movement. Further, our society has produced and is continuing to produce a large number of women who have an awareness

of the disadvantages which accrue to their sex but who were, prior to the reappearance of the feminist movement, unable to take action because of a lack of group support. These women were and are ready for the new feminism, not because they are deprived, deviant, or the victims of disorganization stemming from the erosion of social controls, but because their already existing views of themselves are more coherent with a feminist view of women than with a traditional concept of "woman's role." We also suggest that the process of becoming a feminist may be different, at least for a significant number of feminists, from that which is implied in discussions of conversion experiences and consciousness raising groups. These issues are addressed in a later portion of this article.

In the remainder of this paper, we explore these ideas about the pre-conditions to and the processes of becoming a feminist. Before presenting our data based upon interviews with 54 feminists and elaborating out interpretation, it is necessary to discuss briefly the nature of the women's movement.

Definition of the Movement

Gerlach and Hine (1970) have described contemporary social movements as decentralized, segmented and reticulate. Decentralization means that there is no single leadership which can speak for, direct, or regulate the movement or "even determine who is or is not a member of the movement" (Gerlach and Hine, p. 37). Segmentation refers to the existence of many small units which proliferate and re-form, independent of any central direction. Reticulation describes

the form of interrelationships between the units, which are complex networks of personal and inter-group relationships. These characteristics describe the women's liberation movement as it has developed in the U.S. However, there is an important difference between the women's movement and others. In the women's movement, this form of organization is not only the consequence of the process of movement development, it is also a central tenet of movement ideology. Supposed leaders are largely the creation of the press; identifiable units are usually leaderless and highly egalitarian; many women who identify themselves as being feminists belong to no group and only sporadically participate in group activities. The ideology which supports this type of organization contends that women must not recreate in their own groups the forms of structured oppression of the male-dominated, bureaucratic world. No one person or group can lead or dictate policy because women will not be liberated until they individually assume control of and responsibility for their own destiny.

The women's movement is, we believe, more segmented and more decentralized than other movements. A feminist may or may not belong to an identifiable group. To a large extent, movement membership is determined by self-identification. This involves some kind of action as well as subjective identification. Many feminists who belong to no group go about their daily routines resolutely exerting whatever influences they can to counteract myths and inequities. While these women may not be as totally committed as those who are very active in structured groups, they have to be counted as part of the movement. These characteristics of the movement lead to a number of problems in carrying out any study of feminists.

Research Considerations

It is impossible for the above reasons to specify the universe of feminists or feminist groups. Consequently, it is impossible to draw a representative sample. Without a representative sample, it is, of course, difficult to determine whether observed regularities can reasonably be expected to be regularities of the population. However, we believe that some approximations to reality can be made. Self-identification in terms of commitment and action can be used as the criteria for selecting study subjects. In addition, data collected by researchers working independently with different samples of feminists can be brought together and compared. If there are similar patterns in the findings from diverse samples, there is some confidence that these reflect regularities in the population.

This is the strategy used in developing the following discussion of the preconditions of feminism. These women were selected for study because they were self-identified feminists and, in the researchers' opinions, they were characteristic in behavior and outlook to the many college women they had known in the movement. In addition, these feminists were able to give detailed accounts of their family backgrounds and childhood development. Many of the feminists who cooperated in this research were known to the reserachers prior to the study. Most of them had been students in courses taught by the researchers. Although there had been many informal discussions over a period of months with these women about matters connected with the research, they also agreed to intensive interviews and re-interviews for the study.

The authors are feminists and have been active in the movement inside and outside academe. Being sociologists and feminists the authors sought to clarify movement issues and describe the process of becoming a feminist through the use of social science tools. It is doubtful whether non-feminists and those unidentified with the movement would have been able to gain entre to these feminists. It requires a certain empathy with the movement to establish rapport with feminists. The authors' knowledge of feminists alerted them to the tendency of movement members to engage in reinterpreted history while discussing the experiences of their early childhood. Thus there is confidence of having obtained reasonably objective accounts of these feminists' life histories.

The present research is based primarily on two exploratory studies of feminists (using the criteria of identification and action). One study was done at an undergraduate women's college in the northeast, the other was done at a state university on the west coast.[1] In all 54 women were interviewed, all of whom were students at the time of the interviews. The women studied were white and from predominatly middle class homes.

In most of their families, the father was the sole wage earner. Their occupations were primarily white collar with a few fathers who had recently moved out of blue collar work into white collar work. Parents' educational backgrounds ranged from high school

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[1] The east coast sample included 31 women, all undergraduates. Twenty-one feminists were studied by Mary Howard and 10 were studied by Mary Howard and Helene Raskin (1971). The west coast sample, studied by Joan Acker, included 23 feminists, of whom 11 were graduate students.

graduation through graduate work. The majority had gone beyond high school but did not have graduate training. Efforts to identify developmental differences among feminists according to parents' educational level and occupation were not productive of any systematic differences.

In the east coast group (31 women), the feminists were predominatly Jewish (non-orthodox). Those who were raised in religions other than Judaism were no longer formally affiliated with any religion. Those of Jewish background, however, still engaged in religious observances. In the west coast group (23 feminists), only 3 were Jewish. Of the others, 14 were Protestant and 6 Catholic. Of these none were active in any religion. All of these feminists were in the social sciences and humanities. The findings from these east and west coast studies overlap considerably. Therefore, we have for the most part combined the two studies so as to avoid repetition in the following discussion of findings. In addition to the studies reported here, both authors have extensively and purposively discussed early family and school experiences and the process of coming to a feminist identity with feminist colleagues and students. The research findings have been discussed with non-academic feminists and in both instances we find that there is support for the research findings. These findings are also partially corroborated by Micossi (1970) who reports an exploratory study of feminists in a university setting. Although the following analysis is provisional and we have plans for further research, we have some confidence that they are generalizable to the new wave of American women feminists who are in college.

Developmental Experiences of Feminists

The composite picture of the contemporary feminist which emerges from our research can be described in terms of three models of developmental experience. These models are not mutually exclusive, they intercept in the lives of our feminists. However, the patterns interact in different ways and at the same time seem to present three clearly differentiated types of life experience.

The Bright Academic. Almost all of the feminists studied were high achievers. They had above average academic records in college and most had been top students in high school. A substantial number of women in the west coast study had graduate degrees, or were studying for graduate degrees. In the east coast study of undergraduates two-thirds of the women had double majors. Grade point averages in both groups were well within the A to B+ range. Grade point averages for the student bodies in both schools were from one half to a whole letter grade lower.

Academic success presents women with potential alternative roles and avenues to self-esteem. (This is also emphasized by Micossi (1970).) Whether or not these options are picked up depends to a high degree upon whether or not real opportunities exist and whether or not these opportunities are seen as legitimate. The existence of the women's movement tends to legitimate moving energetically into alternative roles.

The bright academic develops a preference for non-domestic activities which is partically rooted in her family experience. Many of the feminists in our studies indicated that their families had encouraged academic excellence and allowed them time to study, even when this meant that domestic tasks were left undone. Thus,

these families encouraged the daughter to think of herself as competent in areas other than the domestic and provided the conditions for her to progress academically. Because she is expected to achieve academically and is rewarded for her academic performance, she probably spends more time studying, goes into greater depth, and learns more about non-domestic topics than the female student who does not receive familial support for her studies. The more that students learn about life beyond the immediate environment, the more interested they are likely to become in pursuing their studies. Thus, the emerging bright academic is likely to get escalating rewards for excellence in school, both from family and teachers and from the intrinsic fascination of learning. She also has a much higher probability of encountering alternative notions about what her life might be like than the girl who is rewarded primarily for domestic and traditionally feminine behaviors.

The rewards of the domestic role suffer in comparison with the rewards of the academic world. Rewards for home bound activities are more ambiguous and less attributable to self-excellence. At school, the girl engages in a competitive effort where the rules are fairly obvious and the rewards (grades) are regular. Academic effort is largely controllable by the individual student and does not require reliance upon the performance of others. That is, the student studies the appropriate set of materials and takes examinations upon the material. The individual student's efforts are measured and rewarded. At home, the domestic tasks which are often assigned to the girl--tending younger siblings, helping with the cleaning and cooking, being sociable with relatives and guests--do not have such clear rewards. Success is only partly attributable to the efforts of

of any one individual. The autonomy and control which the successful student is beginning to experience in studying is probably considerably lessened at home where most role demands involve close cooperation with others. Thus, we argue, that those female students (assuming they have a certain facility in academic studies) who are given support to pursue their studies probably come to dislike the domestic role, seeing it as too narrow and frustrating. These women account for a sizeable proportion of college feminists.

The Father's Girl. In the west coast group of feminists, a high proportion, about 3/4, had positive, warm feelings about their fathers. The proportion was somewhat lower in the east coast group but still pronounced. They recalled wanting to please the father, being praised for good school work, being father's favorite child, playing with father, doing things with him which are stereotypically activities which sons do with father. There was no such consistent pattern in reports about their relationships with the mother. There were, however, some indications that a more positive relationship existed between the future feminist and her mother when the mother was a working woman and the home was equalitarian.

In the east coast sample, the feminists were asked to rate their mothers in terms of the degree of their removal from the traditional domestic role. Mothers who were removed from the traditional domestic role were characterized as deciding for themselves whether or not to seek employment, as placing relatively low priority on domestic tasks and as sharing family decision-making with their husbands. The feminists who indicated a close relationship with their mothers had mothers who were once removed from the traditional domestic role. Heir's (1972) research offers some corroboration for

this finding. He found that where the mothers were untraditional in their role behavior that their college-attending children tended to favor women's social equality, although this was more pronounced for daughters than sons.

Several other researchers investigating the life experiences of women who evidenced strong achievement orientation, were college educated, and were successful in their occupational pursuits (mainly in the scientific fields) found similar relationships. Hennig (1972) found that women corporate heads reported close, warm relationships with their fathers, although this often meant that the daughter shared the father's interests. Lois Hoffman (1972) reports that in families where the mother pursues a career as well as the father, that both female and male children tend to achieve more and have more variety in roles from which to choose. There is much research which points to the exposure of these women to alternative role models (alternative to the domestic role model) and the encouragement of their participation in alternatives. An important factor is that these women were presented with a choice among roles and given positive support for experimentation in the roles. Beatrice Whiting (1972) has suggested that innovative women (and of course feminists would come under this rubric) probably have mentors who do not accept the idea of differential ability between women and men, nor do these mentors accept discrimination as a determinant of achievement. This was true of many of the feminists we studied.

A high proportion of these feminists were first-born children.[2]

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[2] First-born children are over-represented in the college population (Warren, 1966; Schacter, 1963; Altus, 1966; Leiday, 1968). Hence the question arises as to whether the high proportion of first-born among our feminsts is an artifact of the sample. Subsequent research done in a college population found that 61.4% of a group of feminists were first-born, while only 22.2% of a group of anti-feminists were first-born (Acker, 1972).

Half of these first-born were the oldest in two-girl families. In all of those cases, the younger sister had developed a more traditional and conservative female role for herself than had the feminist respondents. This is contradictory to some suggestions in the literature on birth order which finds that first-borns are more traditionally oriented toward the feminine role than later-born girls (Kammeyer, 1966, 1967; Hendershot, 1969). If these findings in the literature, which are admittedly sparse, are correct, then these feminists are not typical of first-born girls with respect to their orientation to the female role. However, they do follow other patterns described in the literature (LeMay, 1971 reviews the birth order literature) in that they are responsible and achievement-oriented. We suggest that, for these feminists, there were developmental experiences, particularly in their relationships with their fathers, which resulted in receptivity to the message of the women's liberation movement. The warm and supportive relationships with their father seems to have been accompanied by expectations for achievement and other kinds of role performance more often expected of boys. Alice Rossi (1965) has speculated that first-born women often express their high motivation in community activities and live vicariously through the lives of their children. We are suggesting that, given the existence of a women's movement, they turn more eagerly to alternative roles and feminist action than do other women.

Another possibility emerged from the interviews. Many of these feminists in their close relationships with their fathers seemed to have grown up with the feeling that they are special people, important and worthwhile in the eyes of their fathers. At the same time, as

noted above, the fathers' expectations do not lead them to view themselves as less capable than or as having different rights and privileges than boys. With this sense of self, many were indignant when first confronted with overt discrimination against women in school, on jobs, or in political organizations. The ideas of the women's movement all around them--on TV, in the popular magazines, in everyday conversation--provide them with explanations and suggestions for action. An already existing positive self-image is thus supported by the social environment. Since the feminist message is probably more pervasive in the academic environment than elsewhere in our society, this may explain why the women's movement has found some of its strongest support here. In other words, the existence of a pro-feminist milieu may be as important as the existence of ideas about alternatives to the housewife-mother role and a sense of discrepancy between the actual and the possible (see Micossi, 1970) in explaining the assumption of a feminist stance. We suspect that Father's Girls, back in the days when "feminist" was almost a dirty word, were those women who thought and said, "I'm different from other women." Refusing to be categorized as weak, flighty, and dumb, they saw themselves as exceptions and made uneasy alliances with the male world. Some of these women are now in the older ranks of the new feminists, experiencing perhaps for the first time an unambivalent respect for women as they no longer reject most of the other members of their sex.

The Early Independent. Some event in the childhood of a substantian minority of our feminists had propelled them into taking responsibility for themselves and their decisions at an earlier point and in a more definitive way than seems to happen to most middle

class girls. Death of parents, divorce, separation, severe illness of a parent--these kinds of circumstances led these girls to conclude that, in important ways, they had to take care of themselves. One, for example, remembers vividly that at the age of five, after both parents were killed in an accident, she suddenly realized that she was "the only person in the world." These experiences, at least for these women, seem to have led to less dependence on others for approval, support, and reassurance than many women feel. From an early age, then, they were actively involved in defining themselves in the world. With their own notions of who they are and where they were going, they were not severely constrained by the imperatives of traditional roles. As alternatives appeared, often through academic achievement, they were able to make decisions with primary reference to their own inclinations and abilities rather than to the wishes of parents or societal expectations about what a real woman is like. They, too, responded to the ideas of women's liberation because these ideas coincided with their images of themselves as independent decision-making people.

As noted above, these models of the preconditions of feminism are not mutually exclusive. Almost all of our feminists are Bright Academics. Some, but not all, were also Fathers' Girls, and some were Early Independents. These patterns are present in the lives of older feminists also. There are, undoubtedly, other developmental experiences which predispose women to take a feminist position when it is culturally available. The developmental patterns described above are probably only some of those which produce women who have not internalized the expectation that they will be solely housewives and mothers, who resist definitions of themselves as inferior beings,

and who have the potential for protest against discriminatory acts and systems.

The Process of Becoming

The women in our samples seem to have emerged or grown into feminism. We see this as somewhat different from a conversion experience such as has been described elsewhere (micossi, 1970; Newton and Walton, 1971). Similar to Roberta Salper's description of her own experience (1972), most had been unconscious feminists all of their lives. Many could recall some particular experience, often occuring before any contact with other feminists, which suddenly illuminated the reality of discrimination or exploitation. For one it was the discovery that the small college she was attending provided scholarships for men but not for women; for another it was being told by a law school professor that women have no place in law school; for still another it was finding out that she, as a woman, was earning less and working more than a male co-worker in a grocery store; and yet another first confronted it directly when in a group of four student radicals, the other three male, one of the men said, "There are three of us here...," totally ignoring the existence of the woman. These experiences were followed by a greater receptivity to feminist literature, and, as the movement developed, efforts to seek out other women with similar persuasion.

The development of a feminist consciousness may lead to actions which disturb existing female-male relationships, but it seems very possible that many women would not initially begin the transformation without considerable support from their most central primary relationships. Most of the women interviewed received support and encouragement from

the men in their lives. These men had for the most part what might be called an "integrated' life style. That it, they were significantly involved in work, school, hobbies, interest group activities and with the woman being studied, and they expected similar diverse interests and commitments on the part of the women they became involved with. Almost all of our respondents were either dating, living with, or married to men at least ideologically "liberated"; who had few if any objections to women's liberation activities or to rejection of the housewife life plan. Bailyn (1972) also found that this was true of husbands of successful women. These husbands were supportive of multiple roles for women, e.g., wife, career mother, hobbiest.

Participation in consciousness raising groups contributed importantly to the development of a feminist identity and world-view for many of our respondents. This was, however, more true of the east coast group than of the west coast group. For many, involvement in rap groups had been sporadic and short-lived. Personal, individual relationships with other women had been more significant for some. In addition, action in goal-oriented feminist projects, with no overt emphasis on personal revelation or small group interaction had also been important. Campaigns to repeal anti-abortion laws, to increase employment opportunities for women, to improve day-care facilities were among these activities.

These varieties of involvement all contribute to a reinterpretation of individual conflicts as the consequence of social-structural factors and of the self as more competent and aware. In addition, consciousness raising groups and other new forms of relating to other women have the less obvious effect of bringing women closer to other women in contexts in which all women are seen and treated equally. It begins to make no

no difference what their husbands' occupations are, who their boyfriends are, or where their children go to school. In these situations, it is the woman who assumes an identity vis-a-vis other women. In the process of acquiring a new image and identity, women establish friendships with each other. For some women, it is the first time in their lives that they have had other women as friends. Many have previously preferred men to women as friends. Out of these contacts, all of which are consciousness raising, emerges the kind of female subculture that adolescent women, because of the competitive divisions, were unable to develop. This subculture then operates as support for the individual woman's new self-concept.

Summary

Feminism did not die after the passage of the 19th Amendment; it became privatized. Broad social and economic changes weakened the hold of tradition on women by sending unprecendented numbers of women into the labor market and into higher education. This process increased the social visibility of the subordinate status of women. Two groups of women began to articulate the dimensions of that subordinate status. They were (1) the young, radical and educated women, and (2) the older, educated, professional, and middle class women. A large minority of middle class women, who had been prepared through differential socialization to see themselves as independent and as having alternatives to the housewife-mother role, responded positively when a feminist interpretation became culturally available.

The developmental experiences of the feminists in our study comprised three non-exclusive and sometimes mutually reinforcing situations: the bright academic, the father's girl, and the early independent. The process of becoming a feminist was most often a

gradual evolution rather than a sudden conversion. However, most of our respondents were able to cite specific events and periods during their lives when they became conscious of their oppression as women. Following the recognition of their victimization, these latent feminists began to evolve into overt feminists.

Directions for Future Research

This research has begun to answer some questions concerning the child-parent relationships of girls who become feminists. Many unresolved issues are suggested by this analysis. Some of these questions which indicate directions for future research are discussed below.

Many similarities in the early socialization experiences of feminists and successful career women are evident when the findings of this research are compared with studies of career women. Is it possible to find successful career women who are not at least latent feminists? The answer is yes. However, the chances of finding a successful career woman who does not identify with feminism (as defined earlier) are probably less now than previously. The reasons for this have to do with the prevalence of the feminist perspective and consciousness- raising efforts on the part of women. In addition, the federal government's enforcement of anti-sex discrimination laws has informed many persons of the inequities to which feminism is directed.

Another question which should be explored is to what extent are the developmental experiences of college-educated feminists

similar to those of adult feminists who have not attended college? This is closely related to the issue of the differences between middle class and working class feminists. The authors suspect that working class women experience early independence and more responsibility in their youth than middle class women. Yet the opportunities for academic success and the father's girl syndrome are likely to be less prevelent among working class women. Even so, there are undoubtedly many latent feminists among the working class. The women's liberation movement is not inherently a middle class movement as some have chargeed. True, more middle class women than working class women are members, but this has more to do with the availability of certain resources, such as time,and babysitters to stay with children while mother plans her liberation, than with differences of motivation and interpretation of women's experience.

A final question is what are the developmental experiences of male feminists as compared with female feminists? The sex-role socialization of males relies heavily on the rewarding of males for behaviors which differentiate them from females, e.g. participation in all-male athletics. How is it that some males escape these socialization experiences, or develop attitudes and behavior patters which insulate them from the effects of these experiences, thus creating a predisposition for a feminist perspective. The authors' early explorations into this area as well as some other research indicate that the presence of a mother in the home who filled roles other than the domestic (whether the mother was employed fulltime, or heavily involved in community work seems to make little difference) may be more important for the male feminist's development than for the female's development.

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